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THE STORY OF

A SUMMER DAY







NEED I GO TO BED YET?

THE
STORY OF A SUMMER DAY.

BY THE
AUTHOR OF "BUSY BEE," "STRAWBERRY BANK,"
ETC., ETC.

WITH TWENTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS

BY
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THE STORY OF A SUMMER DAY.

CHAPTER I.

WAKING EARLY.

‘URSE, nurse,’ said a little coaxing voice, one bright morning in June, ‘may I get up? I have been awake such a long time. Do let me.’

‘Get up, Master Archie! oh dear, no, not yet. Why, the clock has only just struck five; it is not near time to get up. Make haste and go to sleep again, there’s a good

boy, and don't make a noise, or you will wake baby.'

So Archie had to try and lie still, though he thought it very hard, and felt sure he never could go to sleep again—he was much too wide awake, and the sun was shining so brightly. Indeed, I should not wonder if it was the sun that woke him, for its beams streamed through the little casement window that had the roses and jessamine climbing about it, and having waked up the flowers, and made them look bright and pretty, came in and danced about in his curls, and at last kissed his eyes, and kissed them so hard that they had to open. I think, if I had been nurse, I should have drawn a blind down over that window, so as to let Mr. Sun know that he need not come and pay Archie a visit quite so early. But, perhaps, she did not

know how fond the sun was of that little bed, and Archie always said, when she tucked him up at night, 'Please leave the blind up.' I suppose he thought it made the room dark to have it down, and, like many little boys, he was not very fond of the dark. He liked the bright daylight very much better, and did not mind one bit being by himself in his little room now that the sun was shining, only it made him want very much to get up and run about. However, as nurse said he must be quiet and lie still, he tried to do so, for he knew poor baby was not very well, and that mamma would be very vexed if he woke him out of his nice sleep. So he listened to the birds, who were singing merrily. What a noise they were making! There were black-birds, and thrushes, and starlings, and they seemed as if they were trying which could

sing the loudest. Then, a little way off, Archie could hear a cuckoo, and he began saying over to himself the little rhyme—

‘So you’ve come back again,
And it was you I heard
Proclaiming it to all the world,
You most conceited bird.’

You know he had never really learnt the rhyme, but he had heard his sister Maggie say it, and so had caught this first verse. But I am afraid he did not say it quite right. He said ‘deceited’ bird instead of conceited. You see he was such a little fellow—only four years old.

After he had said the rhyme over very gently to himself a great many times, he got rather tired of that, and thought he would try and whistle like the birds. So he screwed up his rosy little mouth and began, but very

soon there came a 'Hush, hush !' from the next room, and poor baby began to fidget about and make a little noise, just as if he were going to wake.

Poor Archie stopped in a fright, and listened most anxiously until baby was quiet again. Then he wondered what he could do to amuse himself, and at last began to count the patterns on the wall. He did not know how to count more than ten, so, when he had counted ten bunches of flowers, he began again and counted ten more. Then he tried to make them into faces and figures, and all manner of funny things. This kept him quiet for a good while, and, by degrees, the sun left his little bed and went off to something else. Then very soon Archie began to grow sleepy again, and in a little while the lids, with their long lashes, drooped over

his merry little eyes, and he forgot all about everything.

But now, before I say any more, I think I had better tell my little friends all about him, what his name is, how many brothers and sisters he has got, what sort of a place he lives in, and anything else that I think they will care to know. Well, then, to begin, his name is Archibald Dundas, only he is never called Archibald, because, you know, that is too long. People do not like long names, so he is just Archie—dear, little, bright, loving Archie.

He has one little brother, the baby, that nurse was so afraid that he would wake; and I do not wonder at her being afraid either, for the poor little fellow had cried for such a long time before he went to sleep that I am sure nurse must have been quite tired.

You see, there were some troublesome teeth that wanted to come through, and they hurt baby very much. He is not generally a cross baby, but a merry little fellow, of whom Archie is very fond. He is about two years old, and can run about quite nicely, but he cannot talk much, and some of the words says are very funny.

Then, besides the baby, there are two little girls, or big girls, as Archie thinks them, for they are both bigger than he is. Maggie is six years old, and a clever, busy, little woman she is. Archie thinks her quite wonderful. Why, she can really read the 'Peep of Day,' and she knows such numbers of pretty little hymns and poems, and she can do sums, and write on the slate, and has even filled one copy-book. She can sew, too, and has hemmed Archie a pocket-handkerchief, and

she has made him a ball. Such a pretty one! it is all manner of colours, and is so soft that there is no fear of his breaking anything or hurting any one when he tosses it about in the nursery. I am sure it is no wonder that Archie is very fond of Maggie, when she is so kind to him. Indeed, I think he would be a very ungrateful little boy if he was not.

But I must not forget to tell you about Bessie. She is eight years old, and Archie thinks her almost a woman. She does not play with him anything like so much as Maggie does, because she has so many more lessons to do. She can read quite well, even books that are not all written in little easy words, like the 'Peep of Day,' and she is learning French and music. Sometimes, when she comes into the nursery, she says,

‘Bon jour, M. Archie. Bon jour, Mdlle. Maggie. Comment vous portez-vous?’ And then Maggie and Archie laugh, and wish they could talk French too, for they think it sounds so fine. But Bessie tells them that it is very hard, and they won’t like it so much when they have to learn it. But I hope she has made a mistake. At any rate, little children should try to like everything they have to learn.

Now I have told you about Archie’s brother and sisters, I must tell you about the place he lives in. It is such a pretty place, and there is plenty of room for the children to run about, for there is not only a garden round the house, but quite a nice little park, which belongs to their papa, and some pretty woods, in which they find very nice flowers.

There is a little stream, too, or burn, as

the people there call it, and this the children are very fond of. The water is not at all deep. Indeed, it is quite shallow, and is all full of stones and rocks, and the children like paddling about in it very much. Perhaps you wonder that their mamma should let them, but I believe she thinks it makes their ankles strong, so she does not mind, and lets them do it as much as they like. Indeed, in the summer-time, they very often run about nearly all day long without any shoes and stockings on. There are two or three pretty little bridges over this burn, but the children hardly ever use them. They almost always go through the water, or else over the stepping stones.

Then, I must not forget to tell you about their gardens. Of course, they have all got gardens. At least, Archie, and Maggie, and

Bessie have. Bessie's is a very nice garden, and has lots of flowers in it, and Maggie's has a good many. But Archie's garden is a very funny place. The flowers do not seem as if they liked him to take care of them at all ; and I do not much wonder either, for he never can let them alone. He is always digging them up and moving them about, though Bessie often tries to persuade him not to do so. He always says,

‘ No, Bessie ; I won't do it again. Only just this once.’

But he very soon forgets. You see, like many other little boys, he likes digging.

However, I must not forget that we left the little man fast asleep in his bed. And now I will tell you one reason why he was rather in a hurry to get up that particular morning. It was his birthday, and, like many little people,

he thought that such a very delightful day never could be made long enough. He wanted to get up very early, and mamma had promised that he should not go to bed until eight o'clock, which seemed to him very late. They had talked about it the day before, and it was all settled then. At first Archie was very pleased, but, after thinking a little while, he said,

‘ But, mamma, mightn’t I get up when the sun gets up, and not go to bed until he does. Wouldn’t that be a good plan ?’

‘ I am afraid nurse would hardly think so,’ said his mamma, smiling ; ‘ for do you know that to-morrow the sun will get up earlier than any other day in the whole year, and he will stay up longer, too, and will not go to bed until very late indeed. My little man would be very tired if he were to have such a long day as the sun.’

‘ Should I, mamma ? But why will the sun get up so early and go to bed so late ? Do you think it is because it is my birthday ? ’

‘ I am afraid not, Archie. Mr. Sun always gets up early and goes to bed late on the 21st of June. It is a habit of his, and he did so long before Archie was born. You see he is so very busy just now, that he cannot spare much time to spend in bed. He has got to make the grass and the corn grow, and all the nice fruits.’

‘ Yes, mamma, and the flowers too. He has got to make the flowers grow, hasn’t he ? But does God tell him to make the things grow ? ’

‘ Yes, Archie, God tells him to, and sometimes God tells the rain to come down, that the trees and flowers may have something to

drink, and the sun and the rain always do what God tells them.'

'Do they, mamma! Then I hope God won't tell the rain to come down to-morrow, for I want it to be fine on my birthday, don't you?'

'Yes, Archie, very much. But if it does rain you must think of the flowers, and remember that they will be very glad, for they want something to drink rather badly just now.'

'Do they?' said Archie. 'But couldn't they wait until the day after to-morrow? Because my birthday will be done then, you know.'

And the flowers had to wait, at any rate until Archie and his little friends had had all the fun they wanted. The next day was most lovely. I have already told my little

friends how very early the sun looked in at Archie's window and woke him up. Perhaps the sun had listened to the little boy's talk with his mamma the evening before, and thought it would please the little fellow to call him early. But it was not much good either, you see, as nurse would not let him get up. Indeed, I think it would have been kinder to have let him sleep on. But I suppose the sun did not know. Yet it *was* rather a good thing, too, after all, that Archie woke early, and then had another long sleep, at least Maggie thought so, as you shall hear. What do you think the little girl wanted to do? Why to go out before breakfast and gather a lot of flowers to make the nursery look pretty when Archie first came into it. She was going to have numbers of nosegays all

about, and then she wanted to make a pretty wreath to put round the birthday cake that cook had made the day before. She had asked Bessie the evening before if she would not go with her to get the flowers, but Bessie did not seem to care to. She only said,

‘What is the use? Archie is not so fond of flowers as all that, and if you want them, why don’t you ask Sandy to give you some out of the garden?’

‘But I don’t want garden flowers,’ replied Maggie. ‘I want the wild ones, because Archie likes them so much. And I want to get them my own self, because he will like them better if I do. And do you know, Susan says, that there are some water-cresses in the stream at the end of the long field, and she thinks it would be such fun if we were to get some for Archie’s

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breakfast. Susan is going to wake me at half-past six o'clock, and she is going with me. Won't you come too?'

'No,' said Bessie, 'I don't like getting up so early. It is too much bother. And I don't believe Archie will care one bit.'

But Maggie knew better. She was sure Archie would be very pleased, and as Bessie would not come, made up her mind that she and Susan would go by themselves. Susan, you know, was the under nurse, and she and Maggie were great friends. Susan was such a kind girl, and took so much interest in all Maggie's little plans, that it was no wonder Maggie loved her.

'Mind you don't forget, Susan,' Maggie said the night before the great day, as Susan tucked her up in her little bed.

‘ No, Miss Maggie,’ Susan replied, ‘ you may be sure I shan’t. I’ll call you quite early unless it is wet.’

And Susan remembered her promise. She woke Maggie about half-past six, and then they both dressed as fast as possible that they might have plenty of time. Maggie was in such a hurry that it was quite funny to see her. Generally she thought she could not dress herself at all, and liked Susan to do everything for her, but this morning she was so afraid of being late, that she managed to do a great many things. She was in such high spirits, that she found it very hard to be quiet, and Susan had very often to say, ‘ Hush! hush! you will wake Master Archie, and then he will want to know where we are going.’

Happily, Archie had just fallen asleep



DRESSING QUICKLY.

again, or else he certainly would have heard Susan and Maggie as they passed the door of his room and went down stairs, though they tried to be very quiet too, and did not put on their boots. Susan said they would put them on when they got down, and there was no fear of their waking any one.

CHAPTER II.

A KIND LITTLE SISTER.

HOW bright and beautiful it was out of doors that early Midsummer morning! Everything smelt so fresh and sweet, and the air was so cool and pleasant. To Maggie it seemed perfectly delicious, and she told Susan she thought it would be a good plan for them to come out every morning before breakfast.

‘Would not you like it, Susan?’ she said.

‘Very much, Miss Maggie,’ Susan replied; ‘but what do you think nurse would say to it? How would the nursery get cleaned,

and the breakfast things set, and Miss Bessie's hair done ?'

'Oh, I forgot about that,' said Maggie. 'But who is going to do the nursery this morning, and Bessie's hair, and set the breakfast things ?'

'Jane is going to do the nursery, and nurse said she would do Miss Bessie's hair, and get the breakfast ready ; but, of course, they could not do it every day.'

'No, of course not,' replied Maggie, 'because they have lots of other things to do. But I am so glad we came this morning ; only when you called me I was so sleepy at first—my eyes seemed as if they would not open. Shall we get the water-cresses first, or the flowers ?'

'I think we had better get the cresses first,' said Susan, 'because they won't wither,

and perhaps the flowers might, and that would be a pity.'

So they ran down to the little stream in which the water-cresses grew, and soon were very busy gathering them. Maggie took off her shoes and stockings, because she could not very well reach them from the bank, and, besides, she always liked an excuse for getting into the water. But, by-and-by, she gave a little scream, for a fine fat frog stepped right upon one of her feet, and she did not like frogs at all. Then, the minute after, she saw a number of other frogs all swimming about most merrily, and she jumped out of the water in a great hurry. Susan laughed, and said—

'You are not afraid of frogs, are you, Miss Maggie?'

'No,' she replied, 'not *afraid*, but I don't

like them ; they jump so, and they have such big eyes. Let us go somewhere else.'

'But it is just here that the cresses grow,' said Susan. 'Well, never mind, you wait on the bank, and I will gather as many as we want.'

So Maggie watched while Susan got the cresses, and she watched the frogs too, and every now and then called out—

'Oh, take care, Susan, there is a frog close by you ; I am sure it is going to jump on you. There now, there is one just going to get on your back !'

But Susan only laughed, and said—

'Never mind, Miss Maggie, I will soon shake him off if he is so impudent.'

And no frog did jump on to her back, but where do you think one did jump ? Why, right into her basket, all among the cresses,

and it startled her so that she let the basket fall, and it and the cresses tumbled right into the water. It was Maggie's turn to laugh now, and she did so most merrily, clapping her hands, and saying—

‘Ah, Susan, you are afraid of the frogs now.’

But Susan only laughed too, and made haste to pick up the basket. She gave it a good shake, lest Mr. Frog should have hidden himself in a corner, and then she set to work to gather some more cresses.

She soon had enough, and then she and Maggie set off after the flowers. Midsummer, you know, is not the best time of year for wild flowers. All the pretty spring flowers—the primroses, and violets, and bluebells, and daffodils were over. But they found lots of roses, and honeysuckle, and

orchids, and periwinkles, and Susan made a beautiful wreath out of them, or, at any rate, Maggie thought it beautiful. Then, as they came home, they went to a pond on which grew some water-lilies, and Susan, after trying a good while, managed to get two or three of them. Like most water-lilies, they were rather hard to reach, and Maggie was afraid Susan would tumble into the pond.

‘And it is deep, you know, Susan,’ she said; ‘perhaps you would get drowned.’

But Susan was very careful, and held fast to a willow-tree, which grew at the edge, with one hand, while she drew the flowers towards her with a stick.

It was nearly eight o’clock when they got home, and nurse was setting the breakfast. She admired the flowers very much, and told

Susan to get a soup-plate to put the lilies into.

‘I am sure Archie will be pleased,’ she said, ‘but do you know he is not awake yet, nor baby either.’

‘Not awake!’ said Maggy, ‘and he wanted to get up so early. How funny that he should sleep so long on his birthday.’

‘Well, he did wake very early,’ said nurse, ‘and I suppose that is the reason that he is asleep now. He woke about five, and wanted to get up then. However, I should not think he will sleep much longer.’

And just at that minute, Maggie heard his voice, and cried out, ‘There, he is calling now.’

And she and nurse went off to see after him. He was sitting up in bed looking very much astonished, for he could not think why



JUST AWAKE.

it was that nurse was not there. You see, he did not know how late it was. But he jumped up as soon as ever he saw nurse, and said,

‘ I may get up now, mayn’t I?’

‘ To be sure,’ said nurse. ‘ You *have* had a long sleep. We must make haste and get dressed now.’ And she lifted him out of bed and gave him a kiss, saying, as she took him on her lap, ‘ See what a beautiful day you have got for your birthday.’

And Archie put his arms round her neck, and gave her a great squeeze. Then nurse gave him a nice bath, which made him feel fresh and cool, and Maggie brought the towels to rub him dry, and handed nurse all his clothes, one after another, so that he was very soon dressed. Maggie wanted him to be quick, for she was eager to see how he

would like her flowers. I think Bessie was a little bit curious, too, for she came into the room and watched while he was being dressed, and then followed him and Maggie into the nursery. I should not wonder if she rather wished now that she had gone with Maggie, but she did not say so.

You should have seen how delighted Archie was, and how he kissed and hugged Maggie.

‘And you got them your own self,’ he said, ‘all for me?’

‘Yes,’ said Maggie, ‘Susan and I, and we had such fun.’ And then she told them all about the frogs, and the basket tumbling into the water; and they all laughed a great deal. Archie thought the wreath round the cake was much too pretty to be taken off, and at last it was settled that the cake should


not be cut until Archie's aunt and cousins had come.

‘I dare say they will come soon,’ said Bessie, ‘and then you know, Archie, you can give them some cake for lunch. But there is the breakfast bell.’

And off she ran, for Bessie, you know, had her breakfast down stairs with her papa and mamma.

CHAPTER III.

BIRTHDAY PRESENTS.

‘UT did not Archie have any presents?’ I fancy one of my little friends says. Yes, some very nice ones, as you shall hear if you will be a little bit patient.

Almost directly after Bessie had gone down stairs, Susan brought Maggie’s and Archie’s bread and milk up from the kitchen, and nurse called them both to come and sit up to the table. But when Archie reached his chair, he found that somebody was already sitting on it. I wonder whether

you could guess who it was that had been so rude as to take his seat. Susan, you say? Oh! dear no, somebody much smaller than Susan. I do not think Susan would have found Archie's chair at all comfortable. And it was not nurse, and it was not baby. It was just a great big doll: a Mr. Punch, Maggie called him.

‘For I am sure, nurse,’ she said, ‘he is just like the Punch we saw in the show that day when we were at Aunt Mary's. Don't you remember? There was a man with a drum, and he kept making such queer noises, and it came right in front of the house, and we saw it quite well. And then there were a lot of little children came and climbed on the seat where the porters sit, and looked at it, and there was a woman with them, and she had no bonnet on, and

we thought it so funny ; and you said, " Perhaps she had just run out in a hurry to get something from a shop," for she had got a basket with her. And don't you remember there was one little fellow, about the size of baby, who stretched out his hands and wanted to have the dolls. Don't you recollect, nurse ?

‘ Yes, quite well, Miss Maggie.’

‘ But who put Punch here ?’ said Archie.

‘ And is it for me ?’

‘ Don't you think he climbed up there himself,’ said Susan, ‘ while you were looking the other way ?’

‘ No,’ said Archie, gravely, ‘ because you know he couldn't. He couldn't walk. Did you put him there, Susan ?’

‘ No,’ said Susan, ‘ but I think nurse did.’



PUNCH AND JUDY.

‘ Did you, nurse, and is he for me ?’ asked Archie.

And when nurse smiled and said ‘ Yes,’ he jumped upon her lap, and almost smothered her with kisses. For though Archie was a little boy, he was very fond of dolls, at least, funny ones like that. Of course, he did not care to have little girls’ dolls, though sometimes he liked very much playing with some of Maggie’s. Indeed, they very often had fine games with them, for between them they had quite a large family. I really could not tell you how many Maggie had. I am sure it was six or seven at least, and then Bessie had a good many too, and sometimes she let her little brother and sister play with hers. She did not often play with them herself, for now that she was eight years old, she began to think that she was

too old for dolls. It was rather a mistake, don't you think so? For eight years is not so very old after all.

But I must tell you about Archie's other presents. Soon after breakfast, he and Maggie were called down stairs to prayers, and Susan went too. Nurse could not go, because she had to stay with baby, who was not awake yet. Archie always sat close by his mamma at prayers, and he was a good little boy, and always sat very still. But, of course, he did not often understand anything. However, he liked to hear his papa read, and generally listened; and this morning he did hear something which he could understand quite well. He heard his papa speak about the little boy whose birthday it was, and he said to himself, at once, 'That's me;' and then he listened again

very hard to hear what his papa would say next, and he heard him ask God to make Archie a good little boy, and to let him live to grow up to be a very useful man, and when he died to take him to live with Him in heaven. You may be sure Archie was very pleased. He felt to love his papa more than ever, and he made up his mind that he would always try very hard to be good. Then he listened again, and now his papa was praying that God would take care of all the children through the day, and make the day a bright and happy one, and let them all enjoy themselves very much.

Archie thought it was so kind of his papa to talk to God so much about such a little boy as he was, and he wondered whether God would listen. But then he remembered that his mamma had once told him, how God

took care even of all the little, tiny birds, and how not one of them could even tumble to the ground without His noticing it. And he thought to himself that he was a good deal bigger than a bird, so no doubt God would listen. Besides, of course, his papa knew, and he would not pray to God if it was of no use. And yet how wonderful it seemed that the great God who made the great world, and the beautiful sun, and moon, and stars, should notice a little boy who was only four years old. Archie was so busy thinking, that he was quite surprised when he found that prayers were over, and all the people were getting up off their knees. He got up too, and his papa and mamma gave him a great many kisses, and his mamma said she was so glad that he had

such a fine day for his birthday. Then his papa opened a cupboard, and brought out some most delightful, brown paper parcels, and said he wondered whether Archie would like to have them, and whether he could untie the strings. You may be sure Archie did not say 'No,' and he set most busily to work, but some of the knots were too difficult for his little fingers, and mamma and Bessie had to help.

What shouts of delight there were from the little man as one treasure after another was uncovered! There was a beautiful drum and sword from papa, some battledores and shuttlecocks from mamma, a hoop from Bessie, and a most charming horse from Maggie. Archie seemed almost bewildered with such a number of nice presents, and

quite forgot at first to thank anybody. But he did not forget for long, and every one was quite sure that he most thoroughly liked what they had given him.

When Maggie asked him which of his presents he liked best, he said—

‘I like them all best, but I like the drum bestest.’

And then they all laughed, because you know there is not such a word as ‘bestest.’

‘If you like it so very much, Archie,’ said his papa, ‘you must be very kind to it, and not beat it too much, or else, perhaps, it will break. And it would be a good plan, I think, only to beat it when you are in the nursery or out of doors. Suppose you take all the toys away now, and show them to nurse?’

‘Oh yes,’ said Archie, ‘because she will want to see them.’

So Bessie and Maggie helped him, and they carried off all the treasures.

CHAPTER IV.

IN TROUBLE.



UT the children did not find nurse in the nursery, and Susan was not there either. What she was doing I do not know, but nurse had gone down to fetch the baby's breakfast. The little fellow was awake now, and dressed, and he was very busily engaged in washing Betty, the laundry-maid's face.

Betty had come into the nursery to fetch some clothes, and nurse had asked her to stay with baby for a few minutes. She was a great favourite with the little man, and now



WASHING.

they were having fine fun together. He was standing on a table, with a sponge in his hand, which he kept poking into Betty's eyes, saying, 'Dirty, dirty!' And, when she shut her eyes, he only laughed, and tried to rub them open again.

When he saw Bessie, and Maggie, and Archie, he at once wanted to wash all their faces. Of course they let him do it, and then he laughed and crowed, and seemed very much delighted.

He was quite merry and bright, for the troublesome tooth had come through. When nurse came up with his bread and milk, the children stood and watched him eat it, and he made them all taste it, or pretend to do so.

Then Archie showed nurse all his new treasures, and Mr. Baby admired them as

much as anybody. Indeed, he seemed to think they must be meant for him, and to consider himself quite ill-used because he could not have them. Archie let him beat the drum for a little while, and he thought it most delightful to be able to make so much noise. When nurse stopped her ears, and said he would make her quite deaf, he only laughed and seemed highly amused. Indeed, it was quite hard to get the drumstick away from him. Archie let him have it for a good long time, but at last his patience was quite exhausted.

‘Baby, give it to brother Archie, like a good little boy,’ said nurse, coaxingly.

But no, baby thought he would rather keep it to himself, and stretched out his hand to snatch the other also. Poor Archie looked very much disposed to cry, and said—

‘Do make him give it me!’

But it was not an easy task. His usual toys—the dear doll with one leg and a broken head, and the bright-coloured picture-book, had lost all their charms. The drum was what he wanted, and nothing else would do. At last, finding that coaxing was of no use, nurse gently but firmly took the drum and drumstick from him, saying—

‘Baby must let Archie have his own toy.’

The little fellow was just beginning to set up a cry when his mamma came into the room, and he at once forgot all his troubles in his eagerness to go to her. You may be sure that Archie made use of the opportunity to run away with his treasures. They were treasures, indeed, and the whole household had to see them. The only puzzle was how to know which to play with first.

But the nursery evidently was not a safe place to play with any of them—not, at any rate, in baby's present state of mind. So he carried them into the drawing-room, quite forgetting that he was forbidden to play there. For a little while he drew his horse about, imagining, or, as he would have said, 'p'etending' that one corner of the room was the stable, that the hearth-rug was a field, and that the room in general was a large piece of country, in which there was more than one considerable town.

But, as he was by himself, and there was no one to talk to, in a little while he got tired of this game. So he took up the battledore, and began to hit the shuttlecock about. But this was quite a new toy to him, and he could not manage it very well. He could not hit it up straight, so that it should come

down again upon the battledore, as Bessie did. It always went right away, sometimes almost to the other end of the room. Very often, too, it lodged in the most troublesome places. Once it went on to the middle of the table, and he had to climb on a chair to get it off, and in so doing knocked down a little vase that stood near. It was a good thing that it was not broken, and so, you may be sure, he thought. Then it went into a little china cup that was on a cabinet, and it was not at all easy to get it out. But, at last, it went right behind the clock, and then Archie did not know what to do. He got on to the sofa that stood by the side of the fireplace, and even perched himself upon its arm; but it was of no use—he could not reach the shuttlecock.

He did not know what to do. At first he

thought he would go and tell Bessie, but then he remembered directly that he had no business to be playing in the drawing-room at all, and felt afraid that she would say he was a naughty boy. And he knew he did not mean to be naughty—he really had quite forgotten. So he tried again to get it himself, and thought he might, perhaps, poke it out with the battle-dore. But it was of no use. His fat little arms were much too short, and he felt quite in despair, and very much disposed to cry. He wished that he had not begun to play in the drawing-room at all, and began to fear that his nice, new shuttlecock was quite lost. He was sure that he could never tell either mamma, nurse, Susan, or Bessie about it, and only hoped that they would not catch sight of it behind the clock. However, he thought he would try once more, and was



GETTING THE SHUTTLECOCK.

just climbing up on to the sofa again, when one of the servants came into the room. She was a good-natured girl, and at once saw what was the matter.

‘Stay, Master Archie,’ she said, ‘you can’t reach it, but I will soon get it for you.’

And in a minute the unfortunate shuttlecock was rescued. How glad Archie felt when he had it in his own hands again.

‘It is a good thing that it did not knock the vase over,’ said Mary, as she gave it him. ‘How did you come to be playing with it in here, Master Archie? I thought your mamma did not like you to play in the drawing-room.’

‘No, Mary,’ replied Archie; ‘but you see I quite forgot, and baby did so want to have my things, when I was in the nursery, that I did not know where to go.’

‘ Well, I would not play here any longer, at any rate ; because just think what your mamma would say if you did break anything ! Why, now, these vases that the shuttlecock went so near, I have no doubt cost a lot of money ; and, if the shuttlecock had knocked one of them down, why it would have fallen in the fender and been broken all to bits, and then it couldn’t have been mended again.’

‘ Couldn’t it ?’ said Archie, with a very sober look on his face. And the little man felt very glad to think that the vase was not really broken, only might have been.

He ran away at once out of the drawing-room.

CHAPTER V.

THE LITTLE CHICKENS.



FOR a little while Archie amused himself in the hall. He put his horse and his battledore safely away in a corner, and fastening his sword most properly at his side, marched up and down the hall beating his drum.

It was a good thing that there was no one ill in the house, for, as you can imagine, he made a considerable noise. But he was left undisturbed, and thought it fine fun. By-and-by, Maggie came and joined him. She very much wished that she had a drum too,

or even a trumpet, but the only musical instrument that they either of them had among their toys was a broken whistle which would make no noise. She walked up and down with Archie for a little time, no doubt thinking him a very fine fellow, until she suddenly remembered that Bessie had once shown her how to play on a comb. She ran away to fetch one, and then they did make a noise together. I have no doubt some people would have called it a perfect din, but Archie and Maggie, you may be sure, thought it delightful.

‘When I grow up to be a big man,’ said Archie, ‘I shall be a soldier, and then I shall ask them to let me have the big drum.’

‘But soldiers don’t have drums,’ said Maggie, ‘they have only guns and swords.’

‘Oh ! yes, but they do,’ said Archie, ‘at least some of them, for don’t you remember when we went to see the soldiers in the garden in Edinburgh, how they played a lot of music, and there was one man that had a big drum ?’

‘Oh ! yes,’ said Maggie, ‘I remember quite well now, and there were some little boys that played such funny things—they were something like big pairs of scissors, open very wide, only they had not got any handles to them, and there was a piece at the bottom, and the little boys held them in one hand, and hit them with a stick. But the man with the drum was very big, Archie. I don’t think you will ever be so big.’

‘Why not ?’ said Archie, indignantly. ‘I’m pretty big now, and I shall have more birthdays before I am a man. But I daresay

they will let me have the drum even if I am not so big as that man, because you know I am very strong, and can beat it very hard. Do you think it is the best soldier that has the drum, Maggie ?'

'No,' said Maggie, 'I am sure it is not, because papa was a soldier once, and he never had a drum, and I am sure he must have been the best.'

'Was papa a soldier once ?' said Archie ; 'I didn't know that ; and did he ever kill anybody ?'

'No,' said Maggie, 'he never killed anybody. He didn't want to.'

'I shouldn't like killing people,' said Archie. 'When I am a soldier, I won't kill anybody either. I will only wear a red coat, and have a nice sword, and a drum, and march about. Don't you think that is

much the best, Maggie? I don't see what is the use of killing people. I think it is rather unkind.'

'So do I,' said Maggie, 'I can't think what people do it for. I am sure they oughtn't to.'

Thus Maggie and Archie chatted most merrily, until Archie suddenly heard some one calling him, and ran away to see what he was wanted for.

'Come back quickly,' said Maggie, as he went off.

• 'Oh! yes,' replied Archie, 'in a minute—I won't be a minute.'

But he made a great mistake when he said that, for he was a great many minutes. When he reached the nursery, he found Peggie, the hen-wife, there, and she had come to see if he and Master Baby would not

like to go with her to see some pretty, little chickens that had just come out of the shell. Archie was delighted with the idea, and bustled away with Peggie in such a hurry that he quite forgot all about Maggie, and left her in the hall wondering very much why he did not come back.

There were seven new, little chickens, and Archie declared they were the very prettiest, little chickens that any of the hens had got. Baby liked them, too, very much, and tried to catch them as they scampered about. But he could not catch them, because they ran very fast, and though he was a whole year and a half old, and they were only a few hours, he could not go so fast as they did. They always managed to get away. Then, after Archie and baby had seen the chickens, they went with Peggie to feed another hen that was sit-



THE CHICKENS.

ting on some eggs. She was such a good hen that she would not come off them at all for fear that the eggs should get cold. She would not even come off them to get her food, so Peggie always fed her, and now she let Archie do it. Archie liked doing it very much, and then baby wanted to. But he did not manage very well—I think he felt a little bit frightened when the hen stretched out her neck and gave a peck at what he held out to her. At any rate, he drew back in a great hurry, and the poor hen was quite disappointed. At last Peggie was obliged to finish feeding the hen herself.

‘Will she soon have some little chickens too?’ said Archie as they were going away.

‘Yes,’ said Peggie, ‘gay sune now, and I think she’ll ha’ a mony, for she sits so weel, and doesna’ get wearied.’

‘I am sure I should get very tired,’ said Archie; ‘I shouldn’t like to sit still in a basket at all. But look, baby, there’s Maggie.’

For Maggie had got tired of waiting for Archie in the hall, and had come to look for him. Of course she had to see the new, little chickens, and Archie wanted Peggie to show her the hen that they had been feeding. But Peggie said that they must not disturb the poor thing any more, for she did not like being looked at too much.

So they came away from the poultry yard, and Peggie asked Maggie if she thought she could take baby safely back to the house. Maggie was quite sure she could, so she took hold of the little fellow’s hand, and the three trotted off together. But they had not gone far before they met nurse coming to look for

them. Their aunt and cousins had come. Maggie and Archie scampered off when they heard that, and left nurse to bring baby who could not run so fast. What a laughing and talking they heard when they reached the house, and no wonder either, for such a number of cousins had come. There was Tom, and Freddy, and Herbert, three little boys, two older, and one younger than Archie; and then there were two good big girls—Mabel and Fanny. They were bigger than even Bessie, and to Archie they seemed quite grown-up ladies, though I do not think they considered themselves so. They were very kind, good-natured girls, and dearly liked a romp with their little cousins. As soon as Archie came up, of course everybody wished him many happy returns of the day, and then when they had all fairly got into

the house, his aunt gave Archie such a dear, little watering-pot for a birthday present. Archie was delighted with it, for, as I think I told you before, he was very fond of watering the flowers in his garden, and as yet he had never had a watering-pot of his own. He had always been obliged to borrow Bessie's, and he did not think that half so nice. This pretty, new watering-pot, too, was such a funny shape. Archie said there was no fear of any one forgetting whom it belonged to.

‘I don't know, though, Archie,’ said his mamma, ‘for, see, auntie has brought me one too. Perhaps by-and-by you and I will be quarrelling about which is yours and which is mine.’

Archie laughed at such a very funny idea, and said, ‘But, mamma, you never quarrel—

you are a big lady, and big people don't quarrel, do they ?'

' Sometimes, I am afraid, Archie ; but you and I must both take care of our watering-pots, and then we shan't need to quarrel about them. Besides you see mine is bigger than yours, so we shall know them apart by that. But what are you going to do with Tom, and Fred, and Herbert ? Run off with them and have a good game somewhere.'

CHAPTER VI.

CUTTING THE CAKE.



WAY the children went—Maggie and Archie, Tom, Fred, and Herbert, and what a chatter, chatter there soon was. Of course there were all Archie's nice presents to see, and the drum had to be beaten a little, in order to see whether it made a nice noise or not. Tom, at once, pronounced it 'stunning'—a word which he had lately learned of his school-boy brother, and which Archie thought sounded very grand, and you may be sure treasured up in his memory for future use.

Then Maggie suggested that it would be a good plan to cut the birthday cake, for Tom and Fred and Herbert, she was sure, must be hungry after their long drive, and you may be certain that neither Tom, nor Fred, nor Herbert in the least objected; and Archie himself thought it was a capital idea, and ran away at once to ask nurse to get it out of the cupboard for them. It was the first birthday cake that Archie had ever cut, for, on his last birthday, he was too little, and had to have it cut for him. So you may be sure all his cousins watched him with the greatest interest, and little Herbert thought how grand it was to have a birthday and to be four years old. You know he himself was only three and three-quarters, and his birthday, Tom had told him that very morning, would not come for three more months,

which seemed to him a very long time indeed.

‘I wonder who will get the fourpenny piece,’ said Maggie.

‘Oh ! yes,’ said Fred, ‘and the thimble, and the ring. You ought to get the thimble, Maggie, because you are the only girl.’

‘No I am not,’ said Maggie. ‘Why, there is Bessie, and Cousin Mabel, and Cousin Fanny. They are all girls, aren’t they ? And there is mamma and auntie—they are women, and they use thimbles. Perhaps one of them will get it, because, of course, Archie will give them some cake.’

‘Of course I shall,’ said Archie, ‘and papa too. I shall give papa a very big piece, because he is a very big man.’

‘And you will give Herbert a very little piece, I suppose,’ said Tom, ‘because he is a

very little boy. Well, I am glad I am not so very small, because the cake looks uncommonly good, and I should like a good big slice of it.'

'And so should I, too,' said Herbert, who did not altogether like the thought of the cake being portioned out according to size; 'and if I am little, my mouth is big, and I can eat a great deal.'

'I think it would be best to cut the pieces all the same size,' said Maggie; and as everybody seemed to agree with her, that was what Archie did. After he had given Maggie, and Tom, and Fred, and Herbert a piece, he carried a plateful away to the drawing-room, where his mamma and aunt were together with Bessie, and Mabel, and Fanny. He could not find his papa, so he made up his mind to give him his piece after

dinner. Every one thought the cake very nice, and little Herbert was immensely delighted to find the fourpenny piece in his slice. Cousin Mabel got the ring, but no one could find the thimble.

‘What fun it would be if papa should get it,’ said Maggie.

And the best of it was that papa did get it, but it would not go even on to the tip of his little finger, and would be of no use, he said, to help him sew on the buttons that would sometimes come off when he was away from home, so he gave it to Maggie.

But I must not spend too much time in telling you about the cake, or my paper will be quite full before I have told you anything like all the things the children did that day. When Archie was eating his last mouthful, Mabel and Fanny and Bessie came into the

nursery to propose that they should all go into the hay-field and have some fun. You may be sure none of the children said, 'No thank you.' So hats were found, and off they all went. At first they amused themselves with tossing the hay about, and pelting each other with it; but after a little while, Mabel suggested that they should have a game at 'I spy.'

'But how can we?' said Bessie, 'there is nothing to hide behind in this field. The wood is much the best place for "I spy."'

'I do not know that,' said Mabel; 'at that end of the field, you see, they have made the hay up into cocks, and it would be easy enough to hide in them. I think it would be glorious fun.'

'So do I,' said Maggie.

'And so do I,' said Archie.

In fact there was quite a chorus of 'So do I's' from all the little voices.

'Well, then,' said Mabel, 'you all go and cover your eyes in that corner, and I will hide Tom. He won't be able to do it well himself because he will want so much covering up.'

What screaming, and laughing, and shouting there was for the next half-hour. Really the hay-makers in the next field could not get on with their work for watching the merry chase.

'Gay bonnie bairns they be,' said old Peggie Johnson. 'It makes ane feel reet young agin to see them running aboot so fleet and nimble. And that Miss Mabel, she be a braw young leddie. It does ane's heart gude to see her sae lightsome and sae gentle wi' the weans.'

‘Ye be aboot reet there, Peggie,’ said a young woman who was working by Peggie’s side. ‘Miss Mabel jist be a braw young leddie, and no mistake. Wasn’t it she as were sae gude to me when my gude man were ill, and she but a mere bit lassie then? Weel I mind ane day when Sandy were awfu’ bad, and I thocht for sure he were going to dee. She steppit in when I were greeting sair, for I didna ken what to do, and the twa wee bairnies (I had but twa then, ye ken, puir things) were fechting in the corner, and I had nae heart to check them, and they making a sair noise too. She didna say a word, but she jist came and stroked my hand and lookit at me sae pitiful, and then she went up to the weans and sat doon by ’em, and they stopped quarrelling, and lookit at her braw young face. Then

she out wi' a picture from her pocket and telled them aboot it in sae gentle tones, that I were fain to listen. It were aboot the gude Lord making the sick folks weel, and the colours were gay fine, and the weans likit it sair. But it did me mair gude nae them, for it set me thinking as how the Lord were as gude now as He were then, and how mayhap He'd make Sandy weel, too, if I askit Him. So I askit Him richt away, and my heart didna feel sae sair nae mair. Then, when Miss Mabel had done talking, and had telled the bairns all aboot the picture, she said, "Come wi' me into the wood a bit, and we'll make a posy." And the bairns clappit their hands and were mad to go. So she tookit them awa', and she kepit them an hour, and the bit house were still, and I

felt better, and had mair heart to tend Sandy. Ah! she just be a braw young leddy. And she comed many times while she stayed wi' her aunt at the Grange. And then she went awa' and I didna see her agin till after Jamie were born, and were a gude big wean. But ane day, I were a going doon the road wi' little Sandy at my tail, and Bob and Jamie in a big basket. I'd been selling some butter and eggs, you see, and noo the basket were empty, and I put Jamie in it for a ploy, and then Bob scrambled in too, and sae, as I said, I were jist carrying the twa bairnes, when little Sandy callit oot, "Mammy, there's Miss Mabel," and off he set to meet her. And Bob tumbled out of the basket, and there were sic a clappin' o' hands as you never seed. For though it were nigh upon a year since she ganged awa',

the bairnies remembered her weel and how gude she'd been to them.'

Just at this moment, Mabel, in the midst of her merry game, came near the corner where the young woman was standing, and caught sight of her.

'Why there is Janet Macgregor, she said to Bessie. 'Wait a minute, I must go and speak to her.'

And she was over the stile in a minute and in the next field, listening to the poor woman's account of her husband and children, how the bairns had all had the measles, but were quite well again now, though little Jamie had had it very badly, and been weakly for a long time afterwards.

'But he is growing a gay stoot laddie now,' Janet continued, 'and gangs to the schule like a mon. And Sandy is getting a



A BASKETFUL.

grand scholar, and can read like a minister, and is sae gude at the figures that he fills his whole slate wi' 'em, and does sums as neither me nor the father can make oot at a'. But I ha' a new bairn the noo, sic a winsome lassie. The laddies can ne'er mak enoo o' her.'


'You must bring her to see me,' said Mabel. 'Bring all the children into the field this afternoon. I should so like to see them.'

'Sandy is working wi' his feyther,' said Janet, 'for he aye likes to earn a few baw-bees in the holidays; but the ither bairns will be prood to come.'

'Mabel, Mabel, do come!' cried little voices from the next field; and Mabel, taking a hasty farewell of the poor woman, ran back to her cousins.

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE HAY-FIELD.

‘HAT shall we do now, Mabel?’ said all the children, as the young girl at length rejoined the group.

‘What, are you tired of “I spy?” I thought you said you could play at that all day long, Archie?’

‘So I could,’ replied the little man, ‘only I am so hot.’

‘And I am so tired,’ said Fred.

‘And I don’t like the people jumping out upon me,’ said Herbert. ‘It gives me a pain here;’ and the little fellow laid his hand on

his heart. ‘Something goes thump, thump, and—and—I don’t like it.’

‘Well, we won’t play at it any more,’ said Mabel. ‘Let’s go and sit down under that tree, and talk a little bit, till we are all rested. Look, we can make some nice seats of the hay, and the tree will shade us beautifully.’

‘And then you will tell us a story,’ said Tom—‘one of your jolly stories.’

‘Oh, yes; a story, a story,’ echoed all the children.

Mabel smiled, and said, ‘Well, we’ll see.’

The merry little band moved towards the shady corner of the field, and then all the young ones crowded round Mabel, Herbert establishing himself upon her lap.

‘What is the story to be about?’ said Mabel.

‘About a dog,’ said Archie.

‘And about a monkey,’ said Fred. ‘Stories about monkeys are always such fun.’

‘But let there be some children too,’ said Bessie. ‘I don’t care for stories that have no children in them.’

‘A dog, and a monkey, and some children. Let me see. What can I tell you?’

Mabel thought for a little while, and then she began :—

‘Once upon a time there was a little boy called—’

‘Charlie,’ suggested Maggie. ‘Charlie is such a pretty name. Do let it be Charlie.’

‘Well, Charlie, if you like,’ said Mabel; ‘and he had a little sister whose name was May. They were very dear little children, and loved each other very much. May thought Charlie was the very nicest brother



BOPEEP.

there ever was, and Charlie was sure that no one ever had such a dear little sister as May. Charlie was five years old, and May was four, and they used to have the most delightful games together. They hardly ever quarrelled, and, when they did, they were certain to be sorry very soon, and make it up.'

'Had they got a dog?' said Archie, who was afraid that Mabel had, perhaps, forgotten his *reu est*.

'Yes,' replied Mabel, smiling, 'such a dear, good doggie—a big, black, Newfoundland dog. His name was Rover, and he was such a clever fellow, and could do all manner of funny things. He was almost always with the children, and Charlie often said he was sure that Rover understood their games, and liked them as much as they did. Sometimes they would pretend that he was a horse, and

would ride on his back, and that Rover seemed to think great fun. And, if they ever lost anything, they had only to tell him what they wanted, and he was sure to help them look for it, and very often found it too.

‘One day he was really very useful in that way. The children’s mamma had been out for a long drive, and, when she reached home again, she found that she had, somehow or other, lost her muff, which was a very nice one. At first she thought that she must have left it in the carriage, but it was not there, and then she knew she must have dropped it on the road. She was just going to send a man to look for it, when her husband said—

“Rover was out with us this afternoon, and knows exactly where we went to. Let

us send him ; probably he will find it more easily than any one else."

'So he called Rover, and showed him another muff, and told him what he was to do. The good doggie looked rather puzzled at first ; but, in a minute or two, he wagged his tail, as much as to say, "I understand," and set off. And he certainly did understand, for, in about an hour, he came back, bringing the muff quite safely in his mouth.'

'What a dear, good doggie !' said Maggie. 'I don't wonder that Charlie and May loved him very much.'

'And you may be sure they did,' said Mabel. 'And he loved them too—almost too well—for he did not like them to pet or play with any other animal. Indeed, he was jealous even if May seemed very fond of a

doll. One doll, that she played with a good deal, he could not bear, and was always watching for an opportunity to do it some harm. Indeed, I believe he would have torn it all to pieces, if May had not been very careful to keep it out of his way.

‘ But you should just have seen him when the children had a new pet given them—a little, mischievous, grinning monkey, with which they were perfectly delighted. Poor Rover, he went about, with his tail between his legs, looking the very picture of misery. May was quite distressed about it, and tried all she could to persuade him that she and Charlie loved him as much as ever. But it was of no use. Rover could not believe it, as long as they played with that horrid, ugly, little beast.

“ ‘ Never mind,” said her papa ; “ leave

Rover alone. He'll get over it by-and-by, and, perhaps, get quite fond of Jacko."

'But papa was mistaken. Day after day went by, and still Rover seemed utterly miserable. I really should not wonder if he would have died of a broken heart, had it not been found necessary to send Jacko away.

'I will tell you how it was. You know monkeys always are very mischievous, and do all manner of naughty, troublesome things, unless they are very closely watched. Well, Jacko was no better than his brothers, and he had not been in the house many hours before he had knocked down a pretty china vase, and torn May's muslin frock. Of course, he was properly punished, and everybody thought that, when he had been trained a little while, he would grow quite good and obedient. But they were sadly mistaken.

Scarcely a day passed without his being guilty of some piece of mischief, and papa and mamma began to shake their heads, and look very grave.

“ “ We really must get rid of him,” said papa.

‘ But Charlie and May begged so hard, that he might be tried a little longer, that papa at length consented.

“ “ We will ask James to whip him very hard, papa,” said Charlie, “ and then I am sure he will be good.”

• ‘ So Mr. Jacko got a good beating, and howled and cried till poor little May could not help crying too.

‘ But, oh dear me ! it was not of the least use. He was just as naughty again directly afterward. It was a very cold night, and as the cold was not good for Jacko, and he

never would wear any clothes to keep him warm, Charlie's mamma ordered the footman to chain him up in a little room at the back of the coach-house, in which there had been a fire all day.

“It will be warmer for him than his usual sleeping place,” she said, “and if he is chained he cannot do any harm. There is not much to hurt in the room.”

‘This was quite true. There was not much, but there was an inkstand and some account books, and there was a lamp and some curtains to the window. However, of course, Mr. Jacko was placed quite out of reach of any of these things, and James was very careful to make his chain secure. But it was all of no use. When the children went the next morning to open the door and fetch their pet, what do you think they

found? Jacko loose, having broken his chain; the curtains pulled down and torn; the lamp broken, and the oil all running about; the ink upset; and the account books in mere shreds. You may be sure papa was very angry, especially about the account books; and he said that it was of no use talking any more about it, Jacko must be sent away that very day. Of course, Charlie and May were very sorry, but they did not say anything, for they knew papa would not forgive the monkey again. So it was sent to the Zoological Gardens. You should just have seen Rover's delight when he found it was fairly gone. Up went his tail, and away it began to wag; and he jumped and bounded about as if he was almost mad with delight.'

‘ Poor old doggie !’ said Bessie. ‘ But did he ever pull anybody out of the water ?’

‘ Oh ! yes,’ said Mabel, ‘ he was almost too fond of doing that. Charlie and May’s papa used sometimes to take them out to bathe, because he wanted to teach them how to swim, and Rover used always to go with them and swim about too. But at first he always wanted to seize hold of them, and carry them to the shore. Indeed, once or twice he really did carry off Mabel, and no commands of her papa were of any use. He would not let go until he had laid her on the beach. I suppose he thought Mr. Smith wanted to drown his little girl. However, at last, he was made to understand about it, and let the little people bathe undisturbed.’

‘ What a clever doggie he must have been,’ said Maggie. ‘ I wish Trot was as clever as

that; but he is so stupid, he can't learn anything, papa says.'

'I like pussies much better than dogs,' said little Herbert, who all this while lay curled up very like a pussie on Mabel's lap. 'I like my kitten much better than Trot. Don't you, Mabel? Trot is so lazy, and hardly runs about at all, and kittie is always doing funny things.'

'That is because kittie is young, and Trot is old,' said Mabel; 'but I think I certainly like a dog better as a pet. However, the best pet of all is a baby. You were a capital pet,' she added, kissing the little fellow's rosy cheek, 'a year or two ago; now, you know, you are getting a great, disagreeable boy.'

'And our baby is a capital pet now,' said Maggie, 'at least when he is well and his teeth do not hurt him.'




LOOK AT BABY!

‘ But he is getting quite a big baby now,’ said Bessie, ‘ and soon he won’t be a baby at all. Do you remember the day he was born, Maggie ? It seems such a long time ago. Don’t you remember we were having breakfast, at least we had just done, and Susan was bringing in the hot water to wash up the things, when she told us that papa wanted to speak to us down stairs; and she looked at nurse, and nurse looked at her, and they both smiled; and I remember, I wondered what it was all about, and wanted to run down stairs at once, but nurse said, “ Wait for Archie ; I must just wash his face, for his mouth is all sticky with bread and butter.” And then, Archie, you took up your plate and upset all the crumbs, and began banging it about, so that I thought you would have broken it, and called out, “ Look at baby.”’

But nurse did not scold as I thought she would. She seemed too pleased to do that. So we all went down stairs, and I remember papa looked very happy, and when I asked where mamma was, he said, "I am just going to take you to her—she has got something to show you," and he took you up in his arms, Archie, because you know you were quite a little fellow then, and we all went into mamma's room. Mamma was lying in bed, and she looked so happy. And then she showed us the baby, and you did not seem to know what to make of it, and called it a dolly, and when mamma said, "Archie kiss mamma's dolly," you shook your head and said, "No, mamma tiss it." And you would not kiss it either, nor for a good many days afterwards, and for a long time you always called it "Mamma's dolly."

CHAPTER VIII.

A TUMBLE IN THE BURN.

‘ON'T you think we have been sitting here long enough?’ said Fanny.
‘Let’s go and do something else.’

‘What shall we do?’ said Mabel.

‘I vote we go to the burn, and have some fun there. We have not paid it a visit to-day at all. I wonder whether it is very full.’

‘No, it is not at all full,’ said Maggie.
‘It is very empty, and the little waterfall is almost dry.’

‘Well, let us go and see it, at all events,’

said Fanny. 'It is better than sitting here doing nothing.'

So off they all went, sauntering leisurely along, for now that the sun was high it was far too hot to walk quickly, and to run was out of the question. The sound of the little burn, as it tumbled over the stones, was most cool and refreshing, and the little party sat down under the shade of some trees to enjoy it. But little feet, unless very tired, are generally restless, and soon the shoes and stockings were off, and the children were paddling about, trying to catch the little fish that darted rapidly by them.

For some time Mabel and Fanny watched them, but, in a little while, the temptation was too great to be resisted, and, holding up their troublesome skirts, they began paddling too. Of course, this delighted the young

ones, and fine fun they all had. Tom, like so many young gentlemen of his age, had a passion for the queer creatures that live in the water, and was very anxious to find rare insects to put in his aquarium.

‘But you have nothing to put them in,’ objected his sister.

‘Haven’t I?’ said Tom, producing a bottle from his pocket. ‘Do you think I was so silly as to come away this morning without thinking of my aquarium? I mean to get this bottle quite full, if I can.’

‘Well, perhaps that won’t be very difficult,’ said Fanny, ‘for it is not a very big bottle. Look, is not that something worth having? It has got lots of legs, and looks queer enough. There, be quick, or you won’t catch it!’

Tom made a dart at the unsuspecting in-

sect, which, however, was too nimble for him, and escaped. But soon he captured a fresh-water shrimp, with which he was immensely delighted. It was at once placed in the bottle, and very soon a 'perfect beauty of a newt,' as Tom called it, was added to keep it company.

The other children, of course, were highly interested in the search for wonders, but most of the creatures which they tried to catch slipped through their fingers. Little Herbert was particularly eager to find something for Tom's 'quarium,' as he called it. But, poor little man, he only got a good soaking for his pains, for, placing his foot on an unsteady stone, the stone rolled over, and down he went in the water. He did not cry, but scrambled up again in a minute, and wanted to go on looking for 'curosities,' as

he called them. That, however, Mabel would not allow, as she said he would catch cold unless his wet things were taken off at once.

‘Very well,’ said Fanny, ‘I’ll take him into the house. You need not all come.’

‘And take the shoes and stockings, too, do,’ said Mabel, ‘for I am sure the children won’t be able to get them on again this morning, and it will be very troublesome carrying them about.’

For some minutes the rest stood and watched Fanny and the dripping little figure at her side, and then Bessie suggested that they had had enough of the burn.

‘Won’t you come and see our gardens? I have got such lots of flowers in mine. And then there are the bees. Papa has got them

in a glass hive now, and it is such fun watching them. They all are so busy, and seem as if they had not a minute to spare. And I have some bees of my own now. The other bees swarmed, you know, and papa gave the swarm to me, because I was the first person to see it. But you cannot see my bees at work, because they are in a straw hive. But I hope, by-and-by, I shall have a lot of honey, and then mamma is going to buy it of me.'

'And what are you going to do with the money?' said Tom. 'Buy a doll, I suppose?'

'A doll!' said Bessie, indignantly; 'as if I wasn't a great deal too old to care for dolls! Why, I have got ever so many dolls as it is, and I never play with them. I do not know what I shall do with the

money yet, for I have not made up my mind. Perhaps I shall buy some gold-fish.'

'Yes, do,' said Tom, 'and give them to me. They'll look so pretty in my aquarium.'

'Well, that is impudence, I declare,' said Mabel, laughing. 'Don't you do anything of the kind, Bessie. Let Tom buy his own gold-fish.'

Thus the children chatted, till they came to the little plots of ground which belonged to Bessie, and Maggie, and Archie. Cousin Mabel admired Bessie's and Maggie's very much, and thought the nosegay which the little girls gathered for her beautiful. But really it was impossible to help smiling at Archie's.

'I do not exactly see why you call

that a garden,' said the merciless Tom. 'There do not seem to be any flowers in it.'

'Oh, but there were,' said Archie. 'There were some heartsease and some beautiful stocks, last week, just in this corner; but I wanted to make a railway for my little train there. So, you see, I just dug them up, and put them in the other side of the garden, and then they died.'

'That is the way Archie kills all his flowers,' said Bessie. 'He never can understand that it does not do to keep moving them about.'

'Well,' said Fred, 'I think, if we lived in the country, I should like a garden like yours, Archie. I don't think I should mind much about having no flowers. It is so nice to be able to dig and make all sorts of things.'

I wish we did live in the country, don't you, Tom ?'

'Rather !' said Tom. 'It was splendid at North Berwick last year. Do you remember the fun we had on the rocks?'

'And do you remember how you two boys got cut off by the tide?' said Mabel.

'Yes, wasn't it a joke?' replied Tom. 'But didn't Fred just get into a fright. He thought we were going to be drowned, and no mistake.'

'I am sure I didn't,' said Fred, looking as if he had been accused of something very bad. 'Only I did not like stopping in that cave such a time. And you didn't either, I know, Tom.'

'Well, of course, it was rather a bore,' said Tom. 'Still, I liked it, because it was

something to talk about to the boys in the square garden.'

'Oh, do tell us all about it,' cried Maggie. 'I never heard anything of it.'

'Well, you know,' said Mabel, 'it was very hot a great part of the time that we were at North Berwick—too hot to walk; so mamma and Fanny and I used very often to sit reading and working on the beach, while the boys amused themselves in clambering over the rocks and poking about in the pools. One day we had been there for some time—about two hours, I should think; mamma wasn't there that time—there were only Fanny and I. We had both of us got very interesting books, and we both forgot all about the boys. At last, however, I looked up, and saw that the sea was very close at our feet.

'“How high the tide has got,” I said to

Fanny; "it must be time we went home." Then I looked round for the boys, but could only see little Herbert, who was busy making a castle a little way off.

"Where are Fred and Tom?" Fanny called out to him.

"I don't know," said Herbert; "they didn't want to make a castle like me, but said they were going to get some sea-weeds off those rocks;" and then Herbert turned round and pointed with his finger. "But there aren't any rocks there now," he added, quickly; "the sea has come all over them. Do you think it has come over Tom and Fred too? Are they drowned? Oh, I hope not, 'cause I shouldn't like them to be drowned.'

'I should think not,' said Bessie. 'What a funny, little boy Herbert is!'

‘ Yes, isn’t he an odd, little fellow ? But you may be sure Fanny and I were rather in a fright, for we could not see the boys anywhere, and though we couldn’t believe the sea had washed them away we could not imagine what had become of them. We called, and called, but got no answer, and we grew more alarmed every minute. We walked along in the direction in which Herbert had seen them go, still calling their names. But we could not go far, because the shore jutted out, and now that the tide was at its height, the sea washed the foot of the cliff. At last, we thought we heard Tom’s voice, so we called again and then listened. This time there was no doubt. “ We are here,” he said—“ we are all right.” But the voice sounded as if it came round a corner, and we could not see the boys anywhere. “ Where are you ?”

I shouted as loud as I could, "and why don't you come?"

"Because we can't," replied Tom. "We are in a cave here, and the sea comes right up to the entrance, and, indeed, washes in a little bit. But it only wets our feet, and I don't believe it will come any higher—indeed, I think the tide has begun to go down, so we are quite safe. But of course we shall have to wait here for two or three hours."

'How glad you must have been,' said Maggie; 'and I think Tom was very brave not to be frightened. I am sure I should have been dreadfully. Shouldn't you, Bessie?'

'Not if I knew the tide was going down,' said Bessie. 'What could there be to be frightened at?'

'Oh! I don't know,' said Maggie, 'but I

am sure I should not have liked it. And how did you know that the tide was going down, Tom ?

‘ Because I saw that the water did not come quite so high on the wall of the cave. There was a wet mark above it, and then in a little while it left one corner of the cave dry.’

‘ But how long did you have to stop in the cave ?’ said Bessie.

‘ An hour and a half, wasn’t it, Mabel ?’

‘ Yes,’ replied Mabel, ‘ it was just six when we found out where you were, and you couldn’t get out until half-past seven.’

All this while the children had been strolling about the garden, and now they were just opposite a little green-house. Archie’s eye was at once caught by his mamma watering some flowers with her new



WATERING THE FLOWERS.

watering-pot. Into the green-house he darted in a minute, without giving the others time to ask him where he was going to.

‘Mayn’t I get my watering-pot and help you, mamma?’ he cried out.

Mrs. Dundas smiled at the little fellow’s eagerness.

‘Yes, dear, if you like,’ she replied.

And off the little fellow ran, delighted with an opportunity of using his new treasure. He soon came back, and then mamma showed him some flowers standing on the ground, which she said he might water, as they were very thirsty and wanted something to drink very much. How happy Archie felt! He was sure no one had ever had such a beautiful watering-pot before.

CHAPTER IX.

HERBERT AND BABY.



AND now I must tell you about little Herbert. After he had had all his wet things taken off, he wanted very much to go out and find the others, but his mamma said she would rather that he did not. The little boy had not been very well lately, and she thought he had been running about quite long enough.

‘The sun is so very hot, too, now,’ she said, ‘and it is not very far from dinner time either, so just go and stay in the nursery with baby until the others come in. If you

tire yourself out now, you won't be able to go out again in the afternoon ; and you know the others are going to have tea in the hay, and all sorts of fun, and you would be sorry to miss that. Run away, there's a good little boy. I am sure baby will be delighted to see you.'

Herbert felt very much disposed to grumble, and to think himself ill used, and his usually merry, little face was just beginning to look very cross, when fortunately he remembered that mamma always did know best. So he smoothed away the frown from his brow and went off to the nursery. He felt a little bit shy when he reached it; because, you see, he did not know nurse and Susan very well. To be sure nurse had just taken off his wet things for him, and had dressed him in some of Archie's clothes, but Fanny

had been there while nurse did that, and now she was reading in the drawing-room. So Herbert, as I said, felt shy and lonely, and wished very much that he had not tumbled into the water. But it was only for a few minutes. Very soon he and baby were having fine fun together ; for baby was just awake from his morning sleep, and was very lively and merry. No doubt Master Baby was very glad to have some one to play with, for you know he had been alone ever since he came in from seeing the little chickens. He was very full of them still, and wanted to tell Herbert all about them ; but poor Herbert could not understand his baby talk, so nurse had to explain to him what baby meant. You may be sure Herbert wanted, at once, to see the chickens, and nurse said, perhaps she would take him to

see them after dinner. Then the little boys played with some bricks, and Herbert built a nice, large tower. It was so high that he could scarcely reach to the top when he wanted to put on the last brick. Baby looked on and admired, and nurse said it was famous. Then baby thought he would try and build one too, but he did not put the bricks on straight, so that they very soon fell down again. He looked disposed to cry when he saw them tumble down, but Herbert said,

‘Never mind, baby, I’ll help you.’

So baby handed the bricks to Herbert, and Herbert built them up, and very soon there were two towers instead of one.

‘Herbert’s tower, and baby’s tower,’ nurse said.

And baby looked very pleased, and said, ‘Es, baby’s tower.’

After they had all admired these wonderful buildings for some time, and had talked about them a great deal, baby, in getting up suddenly from the ground, managed to strike his fat little elbow against Herbert's tower, and in a minute the whole thing shook, and though Herbert rushed forward to save it, with a great noise, it toppled over, and the bricks rolled about on the floor. I think Herbert was very vexed, for his face grew red, and for a minute he looked very cross and ugly. But when nurse said cheerfully, 'Never mind, Master Herbert; now you can build something else, and I am sure baby did not mean to do it,' Herbert remembered what a tiny boy baby was, and the cloud at once passed from his face.

'So I can,' he said, brightly, 'and it is such fun building things. Let us build a

house, baby—a great big house for your doll to live in.’

‘ ’Es, ’es,’ said baby, clapping his hands ; and he toddled off to fetch his doll. What a wonderful creature it was. Once upon a time, no doubt it had been a very fine fellow—it was a soldier doll—and had a fine, red coat ; and once had had a cocked hat, but that had long ago been pulled off and lost. One of its legs, too, was gone—‘ Shot off in the battle of Waterloo,’ Herbert said he supposed. There was very little left of its nose either, and one of its eyes was poked out. Still baby seemed to think it a very dear dolly, and kissed it a great deal as he brought it to Herbert. Herbert soon built a nice house, and then he said he wished there were some more dolls for the poor old soldier’s wife and children. When nurse

heard him say that, she went to the cupboard and fetched out some more ; they belonged to Maggie and Archie, but she was sure, she said, they would lend them to Herbert if he was very careful not to hurt them. Herbert was very pleased, and he and baby had great fun. They chose out the biggest doll for the wife, and all the others were the boys and girls. Some of them were a good deal bigger than their father, but that they could not help, you know. These, Herbert said, they must pretend were grown up. Then they found a dog in the toy drawer, which they pretended was the soldier's dog, and they made up their minds that as soon as ever Archie came in they would ask him to lend them his fine, new horse. They built a stable all ready for it, and they made a kennel for the dog.

Having made the whole family, in this way, very comfortable, of course the next thing was to find them some dinner. Nurse made them some little, paper dishes and plates, and gave them a piece of bread. This Herbert broke up into pieces, one of which, he said, they would pretend should be a leg of mutton, and another a pudding; then he gathered together all the little crumbs and called them the potatoes. When they were tired of feeding the dolls, they took them out for a walk, and then they pretended they were ill, and the doctor had to come and see them. In fact, they did all sorts of things with them. By-and-by, Fanny came into the nursery to see how Herbert was getting on, and she stood and watched the children at their play for some time, every now and then talking to nurse, with whom she dearly liked to

have a chat. For you must know that long ago, nurse had lived with Fanny's mamma, and, indeed, had been Fanny's nurse when she was a little girl.

After a little while Herbert said, 'Do come and play with us, Fanny.'

'Very well,' said Fanny, good-naturedly, 'but what do you want me to do?'

'I don't know,' said Herbert. 'That is just it; I do not know what to do. The dolls have had their dinner, and they have been ill. They have had the measles, you know, like Fred and me. And, do you know, they were so naughty—at least, two of them were; they would not keep the clothes on, and they would keep jumping up in bed. Their mamma told them not to, but it was no good; they would keep doing it, and, at last, she had to whip them. And

then they behaved better, but, you know, she did not like to whip them at all.'

'I dare say not,' said Fanny. 'But did they get well at last?'

'Yes, at last,' said Herbert, looking very grave. 'But I do not think they would if they had not been whipped, because, if they had gone on getting out of bed, I dare say they would have caught cold, and then I expect they would have died.'

'I expect so, too,' said Fanny. 'Now, suppose we take them out into the country. It is always good for people who have been ill to go into the country.'

'Oh, yes, that will be capital,' said Herbert. 'But where shall the country be?'

'Suppose we pretend that the terrace just in front is the country?' replied Fanny.

‘But mamma said I was to stop indoors,’ said Herbert. ‘Perhaps I mayn’t go.’

‘I don’t think mamma will mind your going there,’ said Fanny, ‘because it is quite cool, and we shan’t stop long. However, perhaps you had better just run and ask her.’

Off Herbert ran, and soon came back with leave.

‘May baby go too?’ said Herbert.

‘Yes,’ replied nurse, ‘if Miss Fanny does not mind taking him.’

Miss Fanny did not mind at all, but baby declined going.

‘Baby stay with nur,’ he kept saying, and no coaxing would induce him to alter his mind.

‘Well, we won’t stay long, then,’ said Fanny. ‘We’ll soon come back. Come along, Herbert.’



PLAYING WITH THE DOLLS.

Wasn't it kind of Fanny to take so much trouble to amuse her little brother? I am sure it was no wonder that Herbert loved both his big sisters very much.

When they reached the terrace, Fanny said that they would pretend that one corner, near the nursery window, was the dolls' house, because baby could see them there. And then they bathed the poor, weak dolls in the sea, and took them out for picnics, and did everything they could think of to make them strong.

'Now let us pretend they are having a dance in the open air,' said Fanny.

So she took hold of one of the dolls by one hand, and Herbert took hold of the other, and they danced round and round most merrily, while the other dolls sat still and watched them—I dare say longing for

the time when their turn would come. However, it was only one or two of them that got the chance of a dance, for very soon the big bell rang, and Fanny said—

‘We must make haste and go in to get ready for dinner.’

Then they saw all the others coming towards the house, and Herbert ran to ask them what they had been doing, and to tell them what fun he had been having while they were away.

CHAPTER X.

AN EAGER SCHOLAR.



WHAT a number of bright, happy faces met around the dinner-table that day! I am sure my little readers would have enjoyed being there, and, I dare say, they would have enjoyed the nice dinner too, for kind mamma had provided everything which she thought the young folks would like. There were chickens, and pigeon-pie, asparagus, and beautiful young peas. There was cherry and currant-tart, too, and lots of jellies and sweet things; and the morning's play in the open air had given

the children famous appetites, so that they soon made many of the dishes look very foolish.

‘Aren’t you going to give the children any strawberries, my dear?’ said papa, as he saw the servant preparing to remove the cloth.

‘Certainly,’ replied mamma; ‘only I thought they would prefer to have them out of doors by-and-by. And they shall have some cherries, too, if they like, and the fun of gathering them into the bargain.’

‘Oh! that will be jolly,’ said Tom, ‘I can climb beautifully. May I climb the tree and shake them down?’

‘Perhaps so, if you don’t think you will shake yourself down too,’ replied Mr. Dundas. ‘But you town boys can’t have much experience in climbing, and I should be sorry

for you to go home with a broken head, or a broken leg.'

'Oh! but I shan't, uncle,' said Tom; 'you needn't be afraid, I often climb the trees in the garden at the back of our house, and I never hurt myself.'

'Well, we shall see; I am coming out into the garden by-and-by. Don't begin gathering till I come. Now off with you all and leave us in peace. I want to talk to auntie, for I have hardly seen her yet.'

'Don't you go out, Mabel and Fanny,' said Mrs. Dundas, as the children left the room, 'if you would rather not. You must be tired after romping with the children all the morning, and they will come to no harm by themselves. Besides, Susan can look after them. I'll send her out as soon as she has had her dinner.'

So Mabel and Fanny went off to the schoolroom to amuse themselves there for a little while, and Bessie stayed with them. I do not know whether she thought it impolite to leave guests alone. Very likely she did, and then it was so nice to do what big girls did; it made her feel so very big herself. And you must know it was Bessie's great ambition to be a grown-up lady. Anything that made her feel older was so very delightful; and now as she sat with her two cousins, she thought to herself if she were only sixteen, like Mabel, how happy she would be. By-and-by, Mabel pulled a piece of tatting out of her pocket and began working; Bessie watched her eagerly, and tried to see how she did it; but the little shuttle darted backwards and forwards far too quickly for Bessie's eye to follow it exactly.

‘Can you tat, Bessie?’ said Mabel at last, noticing the little girl’s interest.

‘No,’ said Bessie; ‘I can crochet, and I can knit. I knitted a pair of socks a little while ago; but I can’t tat, I wish I could; but you do it so fast I can’t see.’

‘Well, I’ll do it slowly for a little while. There, you see, I put the shuttle through that loop, so, and then up again like that. Do you see now?’

‘I think I do,’ said Bessie; ‘I wish I had got a shuttle, and then I would try if I could do it.’

‘Suppose I lend you mine,’ said Mabel, good-naturedly breaking the thread.

‘Oh! thank you,’ said Bessie, ‘I want to learn very much, because I do so like learning new things; but won’t it spoil your work?’

‘Oh, no,’ said Mabel, ‘I can easily join the thread again.’

So the lesson began in earnest, and before long Bessie had learned the stitch. At first she found it very difficult. She put the shuttle through the wrong holes, or she drew the thread tight too soon, and left a long loop. But at last she managed it, and you may be sure she was very delighted when she found that she had really done five or six stitches quite evenly.

‘Now I can make a pretty edging like that you are doing, can’t I?’ she said.

‘Very soon,’ replied her cousin, ‘but that is rather a difficult pattern for a beginning. I will show you an easier one.’

So kind Mabel showed her little cousin a nice, simple pattern, and Bessie did a little piece quite easily.

‘I think tatting is delightful,’ she said. ‘I shall ask mamma to buy me a shuttle to-morrow, and then I shall get up early and do a lot.’

Mabel smiled at her eagerness. ‘And what will you do with it when it is finished?’ she said.

‘Oh, I don’t know,’ she replied. ‘What are you going to do with yours?’

‘I am going to put mine into mamma’s Missionary Basket,’ she replied; ‘and then somebody, I hope, will buy it, and the money will go to help pay for our little black child’s schooling.’

‘Oh! that little Mary, you mean, that you have told me about sometimes, whom the missionaries teach. I think I’ll give my edging to auntie too, and perhaps somebody will buy that.’

While Mabel and Bessie were thus pleasantly occupied, Fanny had strolled off to the nursery, and now she came in with baby in her arms.

‘Aunt wanted nurse for something,’ she said, ‘so I brought baby here, and told her we would take care of him for a little bit. Is not he a jolly, little fellow?’ she added, as baby laughingly made a grab at her bright hair, and tried to pull it all down. ‘No, I am not going to let you do that, so you need not think it, you young rogue.’ And she laid the little man on the ground, and tickled him until he almost screamed with delight. At last he struggled away from her, and ran off and hid himself behind the big chair, looking out mischievously, as much as to say ‘Come and catch me again.’ Then followed such a merry game as you

would have liked to see, until at last the little fellow was tired out, and laid himself down on the rug. Fanny took up a book, and was soon completely lost in a story. But she was not left very long in peace. In less than ten minutes a merry, little face poked itself in between her eyes and the book, and a little, coaxing voice said, 'P'ay again.'

'Oh! come and play with me,' said Mabel, who knew how dearly her sister loved a good story, and how much she disliked being interrupted when she had once begun to read.

But it was of no use. It was Fanny baby wanted, and Fanny he meant to have. So he left her no peace until she laid down her book and began to romp again. By degrees Mabel and Bessie joined in the game, and then the young gentleman was highly delighted.

‘Come and kiss me, baby,’ said Mabel, kneeling down by a chair and looking through the back.

Baby stretched himself up on the tips of his little, fat, rosy toes, for, like his brothers and sisters, he had the greatest objection to shoes and stockings, and kissed her through the opening, laughing and chuckling with delight. It was so very funny, he thought, that he wanted to do it again and again, and then Fanny had to be kissed in the same way, and then Bessie, and then they all had to be kissed over again, all round. At last the girls got rather tired of it, and Mabel persuaded him to sit on her lap and look at a picture.

He was a happy, little fellow, and easily amused, and Mabel’s stories about the pictures were so interesting, that when nurse



KISSING.

came to fetch him, she could hardly persuade him to go with her to the nursery. The girls, however, wanted to go out, so he had to do it.

CHAPTER XI.

ON A DESERT ISLAND.



MEANWHILE the other children had been amusing themselves out of doors. It was too hot for any romping game, so, after vainly trying one or two, they had strolled off into the wood and sat down under the shade of the trees. For a few minutes they were all silent, but soon one and another said—

‘What shall we do? Let’s play at something. It is so stupid doing nothing.’

However, no one seemed able to suggest any game which the others approved of,

until at last a bright idea occurred to Tom.

‘I tell you what,’ said he. ‘Let’s play at living on a desert island.’

‘Oh, yes,’ said Maggie and Freddie at once; ‘that will be capital.’

‘What is a desert island?’ said Archie. ‘Is it a nice place?’

‘It may be a very nice place, indeed,’ said Tom. ‘It has got the sea all round it, and there are no houses or people on it. Mamma read a book to me once about a man called Robinson Crusoe, who lived on a desert island. I forget how he got there, but I know he lived in a cave, and he had a parrot and a gun, and he used to shoot birds for his dinner. And then, by-and-by, he got a black man called Friday, and Friday used to talk so funnily. And they lived on the island for

a long time, until, at last, a ship came and took them away.'

'But what did it take them away for?' said Archie. 'Did they want to go?'

'Yes,' replied Tom. 'I suppose Robinson Crusoe got tired of living all by himself, and wanted to see his friends again. But I think I should have been sorry to go away.'

'Well, let's play at it now,' said Maggie. 'But where shall the cave be, and where is the sea?'

Tom looked all round, and then he said—

'The burn would do beautifully for the sea, but I do not know what we shall do for a cave. But let's go and see if we can find one. Let's pretend we have just been shipwrecked, and have swum on to the island, and don't know what to do. Let's take off our hats, and our shoes, and stockings, and

make ourselves look as miserable as we can, as if we had lost half our clothes in coming to the shore, and then let's go and explore.'

'Oh, yes, let's explore,' said Maggie, who had not the least idea what the word meant.

'I'll be the father,' continued Tom; 'and you, Maggie, shall be the mother, and Fred, and Archie, and Herbert shall be our boys.'

'But Robinson Crusoe had not got a wife, had he?' said Maggie, 'or any children, and, then, who shall be Friday?'

'Oh, we can't be Robinson Crusoe, don't you see?' replied Tom, 'because there are too many of us. We must be some other people. I dare say lots of other people have lived on desert islands, besides Robinson Crusoe. Come, let's go.'

So the would-be adventurers started on their exploring expedition, and soon lighted

upon what Tom pronounced a most excellent cave. It was a hollow tree, into which several of them could squeeze at once, and, as Fred said, it was very easy to imagine that it was larger than it really was.

‘Two or three of us,’ he said, ‘must live outside, of course ; but then, you know, we can pretend we are in the cave. I shall be a great big boy,’ he went on, ‘and then I can go out shooting with father.’

‘Yes,’ said Tom, ‘and Archie had better be big too, and then we three can go out together, while Herbert shall be a little boy and stop at home with his mother. Come, boys,’ he continued, at once assuming the fatherly character, ‘let’s go and try and catch something for dinner. But remember you must not go far away, and must do exactly what I tell you ; for who knows but that

there may be wild beasts in this beautiful island, that would eat you up. Hark! surely that was a lion's roar I heard. Follow me close. If we are bold and brave, perhaps we may carry home to your mother the king of beasts. Hark! Perfect silence!

The boys crept cautiously along, Archie, I fear, no little alarmed. The little man had an uncomfortable feeling that some dreadful beast might pounce out upon him at any minute.

'There he is!' exclaimed Tom. 'I see his head between the bushes! Now for a steady aim. Bang! Hurrah! I have killed him. The bullet went right between his eyes. Now, boys, come and help me carry him home.'

Tom rushed up to a large stone which lay at a little distance, and Archie felt rather re-

lieved to be assured that that and nothing worse was the make-believe lion.

‘Isn’t he heavy!’ said Fred; ‘I don’t think we can carry him home.’ And the three boys tried in vain to lift the ‘monstrous carcase,’ as Tom called it.

‘We must skin it here,’ said Tom, ‘but let us first go back and tell your mother of our good fortune, and bring her to see our prize.’

‘But, father, had we not better find something for dinner first,’ said Fred. ‘Mother won’t like to see us come back with nothing. Besides, I am very hungry.’

‘Couldn’t we have some lion for dinner?’ said little Archie.

‘No, my child,’ replied Tom, with a most parental smile; ‘the flesh of a lion is unfit for human food. But your brother is right,

we had better try and find something that we can eat before we return to the cave.'

So the would-be hunters went on and before long had the good fortune to catch a hare, two rabbits, and a pheasant. It was really surprising what a number of different animals seemed to be collected in that one small island. Besides those I have mentioned, they shot down a tiger, a polar bear, an elephant, and a hippopotamus. They also caught a reindeer, which they led in triumph home. It would be so useful, Tom said, in drawing the sledge, which he meant immediately to make, and would supply them with the most delicious milk.

You can imagine the delight with which they were welcomed when they reached the cave. The mother and her little son were deeply interested in the account Tom gave

of the exploits of the morning, and Maggie made haste to cook the game which they had brought.

‘We need have no fear of want,’ said Tom, as they sat enjoying their dinner; ‘this lovely island is evidently richly stocked with all things needful for the support of life. But the presence of so many wild beasts fills me with alarm. I must as quickly as possible construct some kind of palisade around the cave, or my heart will be torn with the most painful anxiety for you, my love,’ and he turned towards Maggie, ‘whenever I am compelled to leave you. Let us to work at once,’ he continued, addressing Fred and Archie.

Fred and Archie jumped up, both of them thinking what a wonderful boy Tom was to be able to make such a very fine

speech, and very soon the whole party were busily engaged in heaping together sticks and stones.

At length the place was pronounced perfectly secure against the attacks even of the fiercest beasts, and night having come, the little company went to bed. The next day another grand hunt took place, and some wonderful trees were discovered—the Wellingtonia, the date palm, the banyan, and another tree which Tom declared had, to his certain knowledge, never been seen before. They also came upon some rice-fields, and in their immediate neighbourhood, found thick beds of Icelandic moss, of which they at once collected large quantities.

‘It was just the thing,’ Tom said, ‘for the reindeer.’

Thus time passed rapidly by, until at

length, one morning, when Maggie was busily occupied at the mouth of the cave, pretending to wash the clothes of her husband and sons, she was suddenly startled by hearing Fred calling eagerly,

‘Maggie, Maggie ! come quickly, and Herbert too. There’s a balloon, such a big one.’

Off she darted, throwing down Herbert’s pinafore which she was engaged in rubbing, and Herbert followed. They found the boys in the garden, from which they declared the balloon could best be seen.

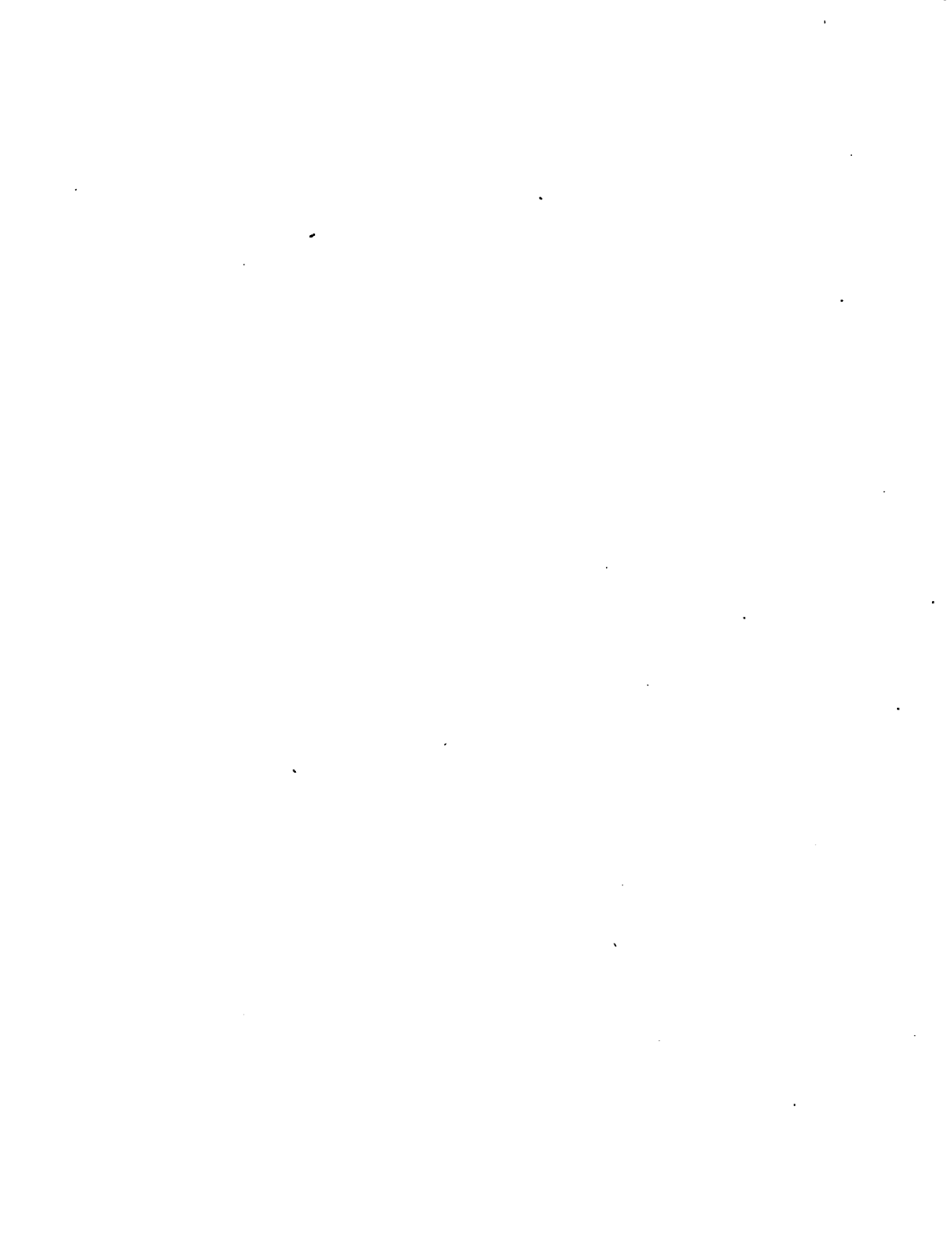
‘But where is it?’ said Herbert, ‘I can’t see it.’

‘Just above those trees there; climb up this ladder. Now don’t you see?’

‘Is it that little black thing just touching the sky?’ said little Herbert clinging on to the top round.



LOOKING AT THE BALLOON.



‘Yes,’ replied Tom, ‘only it isn’t small at all ; it’s very big. I dare say there are three or four men in it ; don’t I wish I was ? It must be such fun going up such a height. Look ! look ! What a rate it is going now. Take care, Fred ! Mind you don’t knock Herbert down,’ for Fred in his eagerness to get a good view began climbing up the back of the ladder.

‘Hulloa ! youngsters. What are you doing on the ladder ? And where are your hats ? Why, you will get sunstrokes ; and Herbert looks as if he had lost nearly all his clothes. What have you been up to ?’

‘Oh ! uncle, do come and look at the balloon,’ cried the children all together, without any regard to his inquiries. ‘There’s such a beauty, and it’s up such a height.’

‘Yes, such a height,’ said Herbert, ‘and it’s going right into the sun.’

‘I hope not,’ said Mr. Dundas. ‘But mind you don’t come tumbling down, little man. Whatever made you get up there?’

‘’Cause I couldn’t see,’ said Herbert. ‘But do look, uncle; isn’t it a nice little balloon?’

‘Yes, I see, Herbert; but really you youngsters must get some hats. Where have you left all your clothes?’

‘In the wood, papa,’ said Archie. ‘We have been having such fun—we have been living on—— What was it, Maggie?’

‘A desert island,’ said Maggie.

‘Oh! yes, a desert island, papa, and Tom was the father, and Maggie was the mother, and we were the children, only Fred and I were big boys. And we killed a lion, and a tiger, and an ephelant, and another thing,


only I can't remember what it was called, and we caught a reindeer, and we lived in a cave, and made a parasol to keep out the wild beasts.'

'A palisade you mean, Archie,' said Tom, 'and it was an elephant we killed, not an ephelant. Oh ! it was so jolly, uncle ; only we saw this balloon, and forgot all about our things. We did not wear our hats, because we thought we would pretend they had been washed off in the sea.'

'Well, you had better go and get them now, and then come into the orchard and gather the cherries.'

CHAPTER XII.

A TUMBLE.

OU may be sure the children did not need telling twice. Away they scampered to fetch their hats.

‘Hadn’t we better take our other things too?’ said Maggie, as she saw Tom and Archie and Fred going off without their shoes and stockings, and Archie without his belt. And do wait for me, for I have got to tie Herbert’s pinafore, and he can’t find his hat.’

Rather reluctantly the boys came back, and then there was a great hunt for the

hat and also for Archie's belt. Neither of them could be found for some minutes, but at last Tom spied the bright buckle of the belt among some long grass. But the hat seemed utterly gone, and Tom grew impatient.

'Can't you remember where you put it, you young monkey?' he said, sharply; 'you are always losing your things.'

'I put it just here with the others,' replied Herbert, nearly ready to cry—'I am sure I did—didn't I, Maggie?'

'Well, I thought you did,' said Maggie; 'but you see it is not here, so I suppose you couldn't have.'

'But I know I did,' said Herbert, 'I put it on the top of Fred's.'

'Don't be a cuddy, Herbert,' said Tom, stamping with impatience. 'Don't you see

you couldn't have put it there. Make haste and think where you did put it, and don't keep us waiting all day. They will have gathered all the cherries before we get there if you don't take care.' And he took hold of the child and gave him a shake.

'Don't, Tom,' said the little fellow, now fairly beginning to cry. 'I did put it there, I know I did. Somebody must have taken it away.'

'Well, I shan't wait any longer,' said Tom, and he went off. Fred and Archie followed him, but Maggie was too kind-hearted to leave her little cousin in his distress.

'Don't cry, Herbert,' she said; 'I dare say we shall find it soon.' And they hunted once more, but in vain. The hat had completely disappeared. 'I think we had better go home and tell auntie about it,' Maggie

said, at last, ‘and I dare say mamma will lend you one of Archie’s.’

‘But it was a new hat,’ said Herbert, ‘mamma only bought it for me yesterday, and I am afraid she will be angry. I don’t like to go.’

‘Well, I will tell her about it, if you like,’ said Maggie, ‘and I will tell her how much you have looked for it, and ask her not to be angry.’

‘But let’s look a little more first,’ said Herbert, ‘perhaps it is behind that big stone.’ And he ran to see. No, it was not there, and, at last, with a very heavy, little heart, he consented to give up the search and go home.

But as they drew near the house what do you think they saw?—Herbert’s hat lying in the middle of the drive.

‘How could it have got here!’ exclaimed Maggie, ‘you certainly did not put it there.’

‘No, I am sure I didn’t,’ replied Herbert. ‘But I am so glad I have found it. Somebody must have taken it away; I said they had.’

‘But I wonder who it could have been,’ said Maggie; ‘it was such a funny thing to leave it on the drive.’

‘I think it must have been Trot,’ said Herbert. ‘He tried to run away with it once this morning when we were playing in the field, only I wouldn’t let him have it. I don’t like Trot; he is not half so nice as my cat.’

‘Well, I dare say it was Trot,’ said Maggie, ‘I never thought of him, but he is very fond of carrying a basket, and perhaps he thought your hat was one. Yes, look here

are the marks of his teeth, and he has torn it a little. But never mind, it is a good thing we have found it, and I'll ask Susan to mend it when we go in. Let's make haste now, and go to the orchard.'

When they arrived, they found a large basket of cherries already gathered.

'What a time you have been,' shouted Tom from one of the branches of the tree. 'Look where I am. It's so jolly up here. Now make haste and pick up the cherries,' and he gave the bough a shake.

'Mayn't I climb up into the tree too, uncle?' said Fred. 'I am sure I could if you would lift me up a little.'

Mr. Dundas lifted Fred on to a good strong bough, and then Herbert and Archie both wanted to get up.

'No, no,' said Mr. Dundas; 'you are

rather too small, and two monkeys are as many as I can look after, especially when they are monkeys that have lived all their lives in a town, and have had small experience in the art of climbing. 'Take care, Master Tom,' he continued, hastily ; 'that bough is rather too thin to bear you.'

'But there are such a lot of cherries up there, uncle,' said Tom, 'and I don't think I shall fall. Do let me try.'

'No,' said Mr. Dundas, decidedly ; 'we will get those cherries by-and-by with a ladder, or else leave them on the tree. They are not worth any broken bones. But, really, I think you have gathered cherries enough. You'll all be ill if you eat that basketful.'

'But mamma wants us to gather a lot for bottling too,' said Maggie. 'She said we were to gather all that were ripe.'

‘Well, I can’t stop any longer,’ said Mr. Dundas; ‘so you had better come down, Master Fred, for I had rather not leave you in the tree. And mind you don’t go any higher, Tom. I shall send Susan out to look after you. Take care you do what she tells you.’

‘Let’s try and get the cherries all gathered before Susan comes,’ said Tom, as soon as his uncle was out of hearing; ‘it will be such a joke. Now, look out!’

And he gave the tree a great shake. A shower of fruit fell to the ground, and the children made haste to gather it up. Still, there were a very large number of cherries left on the tree that a shake would not bring down, and that were quite out of Tom’s reach, stretch as he might. The temptation

was too great, and he stepped upon the next bough.

‘Oh, Tom!’ exclaimed Maggie, ‘papa said you weren’t to.’

‘I know,’ said Tom, ‘but I won’t stop a minute, and I really shan’t hurt. See, the bough is quite strong.’

But, even while he spoke, it cracked and gave way. The other children looked up in the utmost alarm, expecting to see him come crashing to the ground. It would only have been what he richly deserved for his disobedience, had such been the case; but, happily, he had the presence of mind to clutch at a bough as he fell, and so saved himself. He had had a good fright, though, and quickly came down from the tree. I do not fancy he would think himself wiser than his uncle again in a hurry.



GATHERING CHERRIES.

‘Oh, I was so frightened,’ said Maggie, when she saw him safely standing on the ground. ‘I thought you would be sure to be killed, like that boy in my story-book who went out birds’-nesting. But, look, there are Susan, and Mabel, and Fanny. They are bringing a ladder. What a good thing!’

‘I expect papa told them to,’ said Archie.

‘Who has broken the tree?’ said Mabel, as she, and Fanny, and Susan drew near.

‘It was Tom,’ said Fred; ‘but don’t you tell uncle, because he said he wasn’t to.’

‘Wasn’t to break the tree? Well, I should think not,’ said Mabel.

‘No, I didn’t mean that,’ replied Fred. ‘I meant uncle said he wasn’t to get on that bough.’

‘And he did get on, and the bough broke?’

said Fanny. 'Well, I think you may consider yourself a lucky boy, Tom, to have escaped without breaking your legs. Of course, you will tell uncle yourself. There'll be no need for Mabel to do it.'

Tom got very red, and looked as if he would much rather not, but he did not say anything. Then Susan fixed the ladder against the tree, and, while Fanny and Mabel held it to keep it steady, she climbed up and threw down the cherries as fast as the children could gather them up.

CHAPTER XIII.

PRETTY POLL.



At last the cherries were all gathered and the children carried them in triumph to the house. Tom, however, felt a little bit uncomfortable, for he did not at all relish the thought of having to tell his uncle of his disobedience; and yet, after what Fanny had said, he felt that it would be expected of him.

‘But I really don’t see why I should,’ he said to himself. ‘He is not my papa, and I don’t see that it matters to him. Of course, I know I oughtn’t to have done it, but I

wish Fanny hadn't said that. Uncle never need have known anything about it.'

Then he remembered that his uncle would be sure to see the broken bough, and that, even supposing he had a right to run the risk of breaking his own legs if he liked, he certainly had no right to break his uncle's trees. Conscience whispered, too, that, in his uncle's grounds, and under his uncle's charge, he was as much bound to obey him as if he had been his father.

'Well, I suppose I must do it then,' he murmured to himself; 'but I really can't when all the others are by. What shall I do? Because, if I don't tell him at once, perhaps Herbert or somebody will say something about it, and that will make it ever so much worse.'

Just at that minute the children came in

sight of the house, and Tom saw his uncle come out of the door and walk slowly in the direction of the stables, with his riding-whip in his hand.

Without saying a word to any one, Tom darted off after him ; ‘for,’ thought he to himself, ‘if I don’t catch uncle now, perhaps I shan’t be able to for ever so long, and then that will be horrid, for I shall be thinking about it all the time, and it will spoil everything.’

And Tom was quite right. If you ever have such a disagreeable thing to do as to confess you have been disobedient, do not put it off, my little friends, for every minute’s delay only makes it harder, and you will be sure to feel so much better when it is once done.

Tom did, I can tell you, for his uncle was

very kind, and forgave him directly, though, of course, he was sorry and grieved to think that Tom should have done what he had been told not to do.

‘Never mind about the broken bough, my boy,’ he said ; ‘that does not signify much, for the tree had not much beauty to boast of before. Only, next time, try to believe that your elders know better than you do, and only give you orders for your own good. Of course, you might have hurt yourself very much by your fall, and then the pain would have been all the harder to bear, because you would have known that you had brought it upon yourself by your disobedience.’

Tom listened humbly, and did not attempt to defend himself. Then he watched his uncle mount his horse and go gently down the avenue, and, when he was fairly out of

sight, turned and went back to the house, in the hopes of finding his young companions.

However, for some time he could see none of them. They were not in the nursery, they were not in the drawing-room, they were not in the school-room. Neither nurse nor Susan had seen them, and no one could tell him where they had gone. He went back to the orchard, but they were not there, and then he tried the garden, but in vain.

‘They must have gone off to the hay-field to have tea,’ he thought to himself. ‘But I don’t believe it is five o’clock yet, and I know that was the time aunt said that we were to have tea. However, I may as well go and see.’

He started in that direction, but, in passing a conservatory, which was at one end of the house, he heard Archie’s voice, and at once

went in. His aunt was there too, and they were busy feeding some birds.

‘Oh, auntie!’ he exclaimed, ‘I did not know you had a parrot. What a pretty creature! And can it talk?’

‘I believe so, Tom,’ replied his aunt; ‘but I don’t know much about it, for it has only just come. And it is not my bird either.’

‘No, it is mine,’ said Archie, with sparkling eyes. ‘Uncle James has sent it. He brought it all the way from India, and now he has given it to me for a birthday present. I’m so glad. And Uncle James says it can say “Pretty Poll!” and all sorts of funny things. Only it won’t say anything now.’

‘That is just because it is strange and shy,’ said Mrs. Dundas. ‘It’ll talk by-and-by, I have no doubt. But I think we had better



THE BIRDIES.

not leave it just here, for it is very sunny in this corner. It would be more comfortable on the other side of the conservatory.'

And Mrs. Dundas took up the cage.

'Mayn't I carry it, mamma?' said Archie.
'Do let me.'

'You couldn't, Archie, it is too big,' replied his mamma; 'but suppose you and Tom bring the canaries. You can carry them, and I dare say Polly will like some company.'

They found a nice shady corner, and then they stood watching the parrot, Archie and Tom being, of course, most anxious to make it speak. But, for a long time, it was of no use. The bird only put his head on one side, and looked at them in a quizzical manner. Every now and then, too, he opened his beak, and seemed as if he was going to say

something; but he invariably shut it again, without uttering a word.

At last the two children got tired, and Tom said—

‘Let’s go and find the others, and tell them about Polly.’

‘Oh, yes, do,’ said Archie. ‘I forgot. They don’t know anything about it.’

But, just as the children reached the door, Polly found his tongue, and called out after them—

‘Good-bye!’

They turned round quickly, for the bird said it in such a very human tone of voice that it quite startled them; and, when Polly saw their look of astonishment, he burst out laughing, and said—

‘Wasn’t it a joke?’

Of course, the children laughed too, and,

the more they laughed, the more Polly laughed, so that altogether it was great fun. Then, by-and-by, the bird made all the little speeches that he knew, seeming all the while very pleased with the delight which the children showed. He chuckled and danced in the most ridiculous way. But what was the very best of all was his saying, in the most coaxing tone of voice—

‘ Archie Dundas !’

Tom said it sounded just as if the bird had some secret to tell Archie, or some favour it wanted to get out of him.

‘ But I wonder how it learnt my name ?’ said Archie.

‘ Uncle James must have taught it to Polly,’ said Tom. ‘ I dare say he thought you would like it.’

‘ And so I do,’ said Archie, ‘ and I shall


try and teach it to say Bessie and Maggie too. But do let's go and tell the others about Polly.'

'But do you know where they are?' said Tom. 'I couldn't find them. I was looking for them when I heard you talking in here.'

'Perhaps they have gone down to the burn,' said Archie. 'Fred said he thought it would be good fun to make some paper boats, and swim them in the pool by the little bridge. Let's go and see if they are there.'

CHAPTER XIV.

FINDING A SNAKE.

‘ON'T you think it would be a good plan to get some of those pretty ferns, Fanny, that grow in the wood, and take them home with us?’ said Mabel, as they returned with the others from gathering the cherries. ‘I dare say if we wrapped them up in moss, they would keep pretty well until we got home, and they would look so nice in our school-room.’

‘Wouldn’t it be better to put them into some pots?’ said Bessie; ‘I am sure, Macgregor could give you some, and then the

ferns would be sure not to die, and, besides, they would be all ready when you got home.'

'So they would,' said Mabel. 'But pots would be rather a bother to carry; don't you think so, Fanny?'

'Well I don't know,' replied Fanny. 'You see, it is not as if we were going home by the train. We are going to drive, so there will be no getting in and out. And the ferns, as Bessie says, are much more likely to live if we put them straight into pots. I think that would be the best plan.'

'Well, perhaps it would,' said Mabel; 'but let's make haste, or we shan't have time before tea. Do you know whereabouts the best ferns are, Bessie?'

'Oh! yes; I know quite well,' said Bessie, very pleased to think that she could

be of use, and that Fanny considered her idea about the pots a good one. 'I can show you some beauties. There are some oak ferns there, and some beech ; and then in that old wall, on the hill, there are some very curious little, tiny ferns. I do not know what they are called, but I know people like them very much. There was an old gentleman here last week who said he had never seen them in Scotland before, and mamma told me that he knew a great deal about flowers too. Shall I run and fetch a basket?'

'Yes, do,' said Mabel, 'and a trowel, or something to get them up with.'

Bessie ran off to the tool-house, and soon returned provided with all they needed.

'I brought these tins instead of baskets,'

she said, 'because mamma says that they keep the flowers better.'

'No doubt they do,' said Fanny. 'What capital things! Why, I feel quite like a professional botanist,' she continued, as she slung the tin case over her shoulder. 'But they won't hold very much, I am afraid.'

'As much as we shall want, I dare say,' said Mabel. 'The ferns we are going to get are small ones, you know.'

'Yes, the small ones are the prettiest, aren't they?' said Bessie. 'That is what I always say, but Maggie and Archie always want to get the great big things. We made a rockery a little while ago, and they did not like putting little things on it at all—they always wanted to bring home great big pieces of brake.'

'I dare say,' said Mabel, 'little people

generally admire everything that is big. But look ! There is a beautiful plant of oak fern. Let's try and get it ; and see ! there are quantities of hart's tongue.'

They worked away busily for a little while, until they had quite filled their tins, for they dug up a good many flower roots as well as ferns, and then Fanny suggested that they should make a nice bunch of grass. 'That quaking grass is so pretty,' she said, 'and looks so nice in a vase.'

'But wouldn't it be better to pot the ferns first ?' said Bessie.

'Oh no ! they won't hurt for a few minutes, and there is such a lot of that grass, that we shall have a bunch in no time if we all set to work.'

So they did, and for a few minutes each one was too busy to say anything. Then

Bessie gave a scream, and Fanny and Mabel rushed to her, inquiring what was the matter.

‘Look at that horrid snake!’ she said, and without waiting to think, Fanny snatched up a stick and hit at the slimy creature, which came gliding towards the spot where they stood. It was only a small stick, and the blow was not a very hard one; but, to the great surprise of the girls, they saw that it had cut the snake right in half. The head and the part attached to it escaped among the leaves, but the tail began dancing and jumping about in the most curious manner.

‘How very funny,’ said Bessie; ‘I do believe the snake has turned into two.’

‘I believe that it is not a true snake at all, but only a slow-worm,’ said Mabel, ‘for

I remember reading in a book once, that that is just what the slow-worm does. It snaps itself in two when it is struck. Only I never saw one before. But look ! it is lying quite still now.'

'So it is,' said Fanny, 'I suppose it is really dead then now.' And she gave the tail a push with the stick. You can imagine how they all started when it at once began dancing again as livelily as before.

'Well I never saw anything so queer,' said Fanny ; 'I wonder whether it will really turn into another snake, and a head will grow on to it.'

'Oh ! no,' said Mabel, 'that won't happen, but I remember the book said the tail often kept up that sort of jumping and dancing for half an hour ; and that, probably, it was intended as a kind of defence for the crea-

ture—that the snake gets away while people are looking at its tail.’

‘ Well, I should not wonder if that is it,’ said Fanny ; ‘ but see it is quiet again. I don’t think we will disturb it any more. Let’s go and put the ferns and flowers into the pots.’

‘ Yes, do,’ said Bessie. ‘ I’ll go and ask Macgregor for some pots. You will want two or three, won’t you ?’

‘ Yes,’ said Mabel, ‘ and where shall we take the mould from ?’

‘ I don’t exactly know,’ said Bessie, ‘ but I’ll ask Macgregor, because he is rather particular, you know, and might get into a fuss if we disturbed any of the beds.’

She ran away and returned in a few minutes, saying, that if they went down to a spot at the bottom of the garden, they



POTTING FLOWERS.

would find some pots and also a mound of earth which, Macgregor said, would be particularly good for ferns. 'Some of the men have been potting some things there this morning,' she added.

Mabel and Fanny followed her guidance, and having chosen several pots from a pile which lay there, set to work, while Bessie ran off to fetch a piece of string to tie up the grass. Then Maggie came and watched them, and told them all about Archie's new parrot.


'You must really come and see it,' she said, 'as soon as ever you have done the ferns. Archie has been looking for you everywhere to show it you. It is a green parrot, you know, and quite a little one; not half the size of Mrs. Walker's gray one. But it is so pretty, and it has a red ring

round its throat. It says a good many things, and mamma says if we teach it, very likely it will learn some more. But you should hear it laugh. It is so funny.'

'Perhaps I have,' said Mabel. 'What would you say to that? I saw it the other day, when I was at Uncle James's—at least, I feel sure it must have been the same. Only he did not tell me that he was going to give it to Archie.'

CHAPTER XV.

BLOWING BUBBLES.

‘ON'T you think we had better take the pots into the house now?’ said Mabel, when she and Fanny had finished their work. ‘Then they will be all ready when we have to go.’

‘I should think we might as well,’ replied Fanny, ‘or, at any rate, into the conservatory. I suppose we must go and pay the parrot a visit.’

‘Oh, yes, do come,’ said Maggie, ‘and then you can tell me whether it is the one

you saw the other day. But where is Bessie? I thought she was with you.'

'So she was till just now, but she went into the house to tie up some grass, and she hasn't come back. I expect somebody told her about Polly, and she has gone off to see it.'

Fanny was right, and, on their way to the conservatory, Bessie came running to tell them the grand news. She looked a little disappointed when she found they already knew about it, for she specially loved to have something to tell. However, it could not be helped. So they all went in to see the bird, and Mabel and Fanny admired it very much. It was the one that Mabel had imagined it would be, but, as she had never heard it talk, Bessie tried her utmost to make it show off. But this time all attempts were

utterly useless. Polly seemed to imagine that it had already displayed its accomplishments quite enough for one day, and nothing would induce it to speak.

‘Let’s leave it alone now,’ said Mabel; ‘perhaps it will be more amiable by-and-by. I am going in to see what mamma and auntie are doing. Are you coming, Fanny?’

‘No, I think I shall go and look for Tom and the others,’ replied Fanny.

So she, and Bessie, and Maggie strolled out of the conservatory.

‘How dreadfully the roses seem blighted this year,’ said Fanny, as they passed a pretty standard tree. ‘I really thought those were moss roses on that tree, but now I see it is only because the flowers are so covered with that wretched little green fly.’

‘Yes,’ replied Bessie, ‘mamma is quite in

a way about the roses. She thought we should have such lots this year, because there had been so many new trees put in, and now they are nearly all spoilt—at least, it seems as if they were going to be.'

'But can't they do anything for them?'

'Oh, yes,' said Bessie, who was a most knowing, little person, and always kept her ears and eyes wide open. 'I know Macgregor smokes them, and washes them with tobacco-water, and, I suppose, it does some good; but still, you see, they are very bad.'

'Aren't soap-suds good things?' said Fanny. 'I thought that was what gardeners used for getting rid of blight.'

'They do use it sometimes for something, I know,' said Bessie; 'but I don't know whether it is for that kind of blight. Look, there is a pail of it there!'

‘So there is,’ said Fanny. ‘What thick stuff!’ she added, putting her finger into it. ‘Wouldn’t it make beautiful bubbles?’

‘That it would,’ said Bessie, ‘far better than the stuff we make in the nursery. Let’s blow some bubbles now. There are some pipes, I know.’

‘Well, if you like,’ said Fanny.

So Maggie was dispatched to fetch the pipes, and then the fun began. It was rather difficult to get at the soap-suds in the pail, because the pail was only about a quarter full. So they dipped some out into garden saucers, and then they managed capitally. The bubbles which they blew had all the colours of the rainbow, and it was most amusing to watch them as they floated away in the air. Some of them, of course, burst almost immediately, but others rose higher

and higher, until they went right out of sight.

‘I can’t think what it is which makes the bubbles all sorts of different colours,’ said Bessie, ‘because the soapy water is all one colour. And, then, they change so. One minute a bubble will be red, and then it gets blue, and then a little bit of it will look green or yellow, and then it will turn all sorts of colours. Do you know what it is, Cousin Fanny?’

‘I don’t think I do exactly,’ said Fanny; ‘at least, not well enough to explain it to you. But I know it is something to do with the light striking on the water, and I believe it is just the same thing which makes the rainbow. No doubt, your papa would tell you all about it if you asked him.’



BLOWING BUBBLES.

Just at this minute the boys came trooping round the corner, exclaiming—

‘Here they are, at last!’

‘We have been hunting for you everywhere,’ said Tom. ‘Where have you been?’

‘Only digging up some ferns and roots to take home,’ replied Fanny. ‘But what have you been doing?’

‘Oh, we have been having such jolly fun down in the burn. We made a whole navy of paper ships; at least, two navies, and then we had a battle—the battle of Trafalgar, you know, that you were telling me about the other day, and Nelson was killed; and then we brought him home, and buried him in St. Paul’s. And we wanted to play at Horatius keeping the bridge, only there wasn’t enough of us; because, you see, if I had been Horatius, and Fred and Archie, Spurius

Lartius and Herminius, there would only have been Herbert for all the enemies, and that would never have done. Besides, Archie doesn't know about Horatius, and I couldn't make him understand. And then, too, we could not play it properly without my jumping into the water, and getting all wet; and I thought, perhaps, mamma would not like that, as Herbert had had to have his clothes dried this morning. I thought, perhaps, she would say it was giving nurse too much trouble.'

'Well, I should think that is very likely,' replied Fanny. 'At any rate, it is as well that you didn't try. But, look, there is a splendid bubble!'

The children watched the bright globe as it slowly floated before the wind, until a sudden gust caught it and it burst.

‘What a pity!’ said Maggie. ‘I thought it would go right away out of sight. How nice it must be to go up like that. I wish I could.’

‘Well, get into a balloon then,’ said Tom. ‘Why shouldn’t you?’

‘Oh! I should be afraid,’ said Maggie, ‘because sometimes they come down in the sea, and then the people are killed. I wish I could fly like the birds—it must be so nice to have wings.’

‘When I am a big man,’ said Herbert, ‘I shall try and make some; I could tie them on, you know. And I will make you some too, Maggie, and then we can fly about together.’

The other children laughed at the funny idea, and Fanny said,

‘I don’t expect you could fly, Herbert,

even if you could make yourself some wings.'

'But I don't see exactly why,' said Tom. 'People can eat with false teeth. Why should not they fly with false wings? I don't see any difference.'

'But there is a great difference,' said Fanny; 'it is natural to people to eat, but it is not natural to them to fly, and their bodies are not made for it, they are much too heavy.'

'Of course,' said Tom, 'because they are much bigger.'

'Yes,' replied Fanny, 'but I mean in proportion. If you could find a bird and a man of the same size, you would find that the bird was much the lightest. A bird's bones are hollow, and are full of hot air, and that makes it light. People have tried a

great many times to make artificial wings, but they have never succeeded in making any that were of any use.'

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DOVECOT.



LITTLE Herbert did not care to listen to the talk about false wings, so he wandered off after a butterfly. The pretty creature went flying on round and round, now here, and now there. For a minute it would settle on a leaf or flower, and then Herbert thought he would certainly catch it. But just as he stretched out his fat little hand, the butterfly was sure to fly away again. However, Herbert was not easily to be discouraged, and tried over and over again, until at last the butterfly rose

high into the air, and he could see it no longer. He had had a long run after it, and found himself close to the poultry-yard. At once the thought of the little chickens came into his head, and he looked about to see if he could catch a sight of them. Just at that minute Peggie came out of the hen-house, and, seeing the little boy, guessed what he wanted.

‘Do you want to see the wee chicks?’ she asked, and when Herbert said, ‘Yes,’ she put down the basket of eggs which she had in her hand, and led him to the spot where the little creatures were scampering about. Herbert was delighted with them, especially as he had never seen any little chickens before. It amused him so much to see the way in which the little, yellow, downy things scrambled in and out of the coop, and got

under their mother's wings, and on to her back. Then Peggie showed him some young ducks which had been hatched about three weeks, and were now swimming about most happily in a little, tiny pond which there was in one corner of the poultry-yard. There were some little geese too for him to see, and a most beautiful peacock. Herbert liked the peacock very much, because of its beautiful tail, but he did not like the noise it made. He said it sounded as if the bird was very cross.

Then, when Herbert had seen all the creatures that were in the poultry-yard, Peggie took him to the dovecot to see the pigeons.

It was a very large, old-fashioned one, and Peggie first of all opened the door and let him look inside. Herbert thought it such a

funny place, and exclaimed at the number of birds.

‘Weel, there be gude mony,’ replied Peggy, ‘but for a’ that the ducket would hold mair. It isna sae foo’ as a bit syne. And the puir birdies be out the noo seeking their meat. There’ll be mair by-and-by.’

Then Peggie took Herbert up a staircase which there was outside the building, in order that he might see the birds closer. Some of them were very tame, and came directly Peggie called them, and settled on her hand.

There were a good many different kinds. Two or three Peggie pointed out and told Herbert that they were carriers.

‘Carriers!’ said Herbert, ‘I thought carriers were men who took boxes and big

parcels about in a cart. I know there is one comes to our house sometimes when mamma wants to send something to auntie. How can a bird be a carrier ?

Peggie laughed at Herbert's look of astonishment and perplexity, and then she said, ' Weel, Master Herbert, the puir birdies be carriers, for a' that they canna carry big parcels, or kists, or drive a machine. Now, if you were to tak' yon birdie wi' you to Edinburgh the night, and when ye had gotten there, were to tie a letter or a wee parcel round her neck, she'd bring it safe to me in the morn.'

' Would she ?' said Herbert. ' But how would she know the way ?'

' That I canna tell ye,' said Peggie ; 'but I know she'd do it. Indeed, she'd be here lang afore the morn.'



THE PIGEONS.

‘And would she bring an answer back?’ inquired Herbert.

‘Na, na,’ said Peggie, ‘she couldna do that—she could only find her way hame.’

‘Then mamma’s carrier is the best,’ said Herbert, ‘because he can go wherever mamma tells him to.’

‘To be sure, Master Herbert, the mon is better than the bird,’ said Peggie; ‘but do you see yon white pigeon that is coming towards the ducket the noo? That is a fan-tail, and a grand bird she be; there’s her mate wi’ her.’

‘Oh! what pretty creatures,’ said Herbert, as the two birds alighted on Peggie’s head, and stretching their long necks, took some Indian corn from between Peggie’s lips.

‘I wish they would let me feed them.’

‘Try them, Master Herbert,’ said Peggie;

and she gave the little boy some corn. He held it out in his hand, and after a little while, one of the birds mustered up sufficient courage to peck a few grains. Then, seeing that no harm happened, the other bird did the same, and Herbert was delighted. 'I wish they would take it out of my mouth as they did out of yours,' he said.

'Weel, try,' said Peggie again.

Herbert did try, and soon the two birds were perched on Herbert's head, taking grains of corn from his mouth as fast as he could place them there.

'How I wish we lived in the country,' he said; a wish that he had already felt many times that morning.

CHAPTER XVII.

KNICKERBOCKERS.



DO not know how long Herbert would have stayed looking at the pigeons, had he not heard Susan calling him. It was nearly time for tea, and nurse had sent her to fetch the children in, that their hands and faces might be washed, and that they might be made generally tidy.

‘They are sure to look like little beggars by this time,’ she said, ‘for they have been running about the whole afternoon, and there never were such children for getting them-

selves into a mess as our children. I do not know whether their cousins are as bad. At any rate, you had better bring them all in.'

Herbert felt very unwilling to come away from the dove-cot; but, when he remembered that tea was to be in the hay-field, and thought of the beautiful cherries and strawberries that were to accompany it, he came down quickly enough.

'Your papa has come, Master Herbert,' said Susan, 'and he has brought Master Archie such a beautiful peep-show. We must make haste, or you won't have time to see it, for they were taking out the tea-things when I came to look for you. And I had such a hunt to find you. I never thought of you being here.'

When Herbert heard that, he set off running, and he ran so fast that he reached the

house in a very few minutes. Archie came running out to meet him, saying—

‘Oh, do come, Herbert, and see what a beautiful thing Uncle Tom has brought me. It is a great big box, with a glass to look through, and there are all sorts of nice pictures inside, only the people look like real people, and the houses and trees too. They don’t look like pictures in a picture-book. Do come and see it.’

You may be sure Herbert did not want any pressing. He was quite as eager to see the stereoscope as Archie was to show it; and, seeing Archie’s new Punch lying in a corner of the hall, he snatched it up, in order that the doll might enjoy the pleasure too. Susan said they must not stay long looking at the new treasure, or else they would never be ready, and would keep every one waiting

for tea ; but they kept begging so for ‘just one slide more,’ and then another, that, at last, nurse sent Bessie to see, as she said, ‘whatever they were doing.’ Even then, Susan found it hard to get the little fellows away, though Bessie assured them that nurse would be very angry if they did not come at once. At last a bright thought struck Susan—

‘There is something else that is new to see in the nursery,’ she said, ‘and something for Master Archie too. Let’s make haste, or else, perhaps, nurse will put it away, and not let us see it until to-morrow.’

Archie jumped off the stool at once when he heard that.

‘Something else for me ! What is it ? Do tell me.’

‘No, no,’ said Susan ; ‘you must come



THE PEEP-SHOW.

and see. It is something you have wanted to have for a long time.'

'Some knicks! some knicks! I do believe!' said Archie, clapping his hands with delight. 'Mamma said I should have some when I was four years old.'

And he darted off to the nursery. Nurse could not think what was the matter with him, but she understood his excitement when he called out—

'The knicks! Oh, do show me the knicks! Where are the knicks?'

However, she only smiled and said—

'Make haste and take off your pinafore, and then, when I have washed your face and hands, we will put them on.'

She needn't have said 'Make haste!' There really was no occasion for that, for never was a pinafore taken off in a greater

hurry. Archie, like most little boys, was so very eager to get rid of what he considered baby's clothes. In a very few minutes he was dressed in a very pretty suit of little boys' clothes, and you may be sure that he at once felt himself, at the very least, a couple of inches taller. It was so very like a man to have long sleeves, and long stockings, and knickerbockers, and so many pockets.

‘But papa does not wear knickerbockers,’ said Bessie, who was rather too fond of teasing her little brother. ‘Men don’t wear them—only boys, and little boys, too, for I heard mamma saying the other day that Teddy Johnson was getting quite too big for them, and he is only ten.’

‘But gentlemen do wear them sometimes,’ said Archie, indignantly. ‘Mr. Brooksbank

wears them very often, and Mr. Grey, too ; and papa wears them sometimes.'

'Only when he is shooting,' said Bessie. 'And I don't believe they are at all the same shape as yours.'

'I am sure they are,' said Archie. 'I wish you wouldn't tease so, Bessie.'

'Ah, now, you are going to cry, are you ?' continued the provoking Bessie. 'That is very much like a man, isn't it ?'

'For shame, Miss Bessie,' said nurse ; 'you had better go downstairs. I won't have you vexing your little brother in that way. He looks very nice, and it hurts nobody if he does think himself getting quite a man. At any rate, big or little, he is a very dear little man, and I won't have him teased. So you had better go, Miss Bessie.'

Bessie looked rather abashed, and went off

without saying a word. When she was gone, nurse said, 'Now, Master Archie, I am afraid we must put a pinafore on, because it would never do to spoil that nice suit by spilling tea over it, or staining it with fruit.'

Archie looked as if he did not like the idea of a pinafore at all, and begged that at any rate he might run downstairs first and show his new suit to his papa and mamma. Nurse let him go, and they thought it looked very nice indeed, and did not say anything at all about knickerbockers being only fit for small boys. Indeed, his papa said,

'Really, Archie, you look quite like a man. I must take care that I do not make a mistake and put on your knickerbockers instead of my own the next time I go out shooting.'

So Archie felt quite happy again, and ran

upstairs to have his pinafore on with a very bright face. And then, too, nurse produced one with long sleeves, and he did not mind having that on, for it was much more manly than the thing he had worn in the morning. Indeed, Archie felt sure that the painter who had been working in the house a short time before had worn one almost exactly like it, and he was quite a grown-up man.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON THE HAYSTACK.



THE tea was set out in a very pretty spot, under some beautiful beech-trees. The little burn was not far off, and the chattering of its waters as it tumbled over the stones was very pleasant to listen to on that hot afternoon. The hay-makers were still at work in the fields around, and every now and then the sound of their voices, as they either talked or merrily sang, came up to the happy party as they sat around the well-filled table. The children wanted the table-cloth to be spread

on the grass that it might be ‘just like a picnic,’ they said, but as papa seemed to consider the want of a table one of the disagreeable parts of a picnic, mamma decided that they could not be indulged. If you had listened to their merry laughter, I am sure you would have agreed with me that they were not very much to be pitied, and that they could scarcely have been happier if they had been seated like true gipsies on the ground. The strawberries and cream were so exceedingly good, and the cake and scones ‘first-rate.’ The bread and butter, too, Herbert was sure, tasted nicer than what he had in the nursery at home, and his tea was deliciously sweet. The fact was, the day in the pure country air had given him a capital appetite.

‘I think you had better leave him be-

hind,' said Mr. Dundas; 'it would do him a world of good to run wild about the woods for a while. What do you say, Herbert? Would you like to stay and play with Archie for a week or so?'

Herbert's eyes sparkled with delight at the thought. 'Oh yes! uncle, so much. And might I see the little chickens every day, and the pigeons, and paddle in the burn? May I stay, mamma? Oh! do let me!'

Mamma smiled at her little boy's eagerness. 'Will you be very good?' she said, 'and promise to give nobody any trouble, but always to do exactly what you are bidden?'

'Oh yes! mamma. May I? Do say yes!'

'Well, I will say yes, then, since uncle and aunt are so kind as to ask you, for I think

a little time in the country would make you quite strong and rosy again.'

So it was settled that Herbert should be left behind for a week, and his mamma said she would send him some clothes the next day. You may be sure Archie and Maggie were very much delighted, and began at once planning all manner of fine things they would do together.

When tea was over, and the children had eaten a surprising quantity of good things, Archie's papa and his uncle had a grand romp with the children in the hay, and then they all climbed up a ladder, and sat on the top of a haystack that was partly made.

'This wouldn't be a bad place to sleep, would it?' said Uncle Arthur. 'Suppose we stop here all night? It is pleasanter than indoors this hot weather.'

‘But wouldn’t some robbers come?’ said little Herbert, looking rather alarmed, ‘or some wild beasts? I shouldn’t like to stay out all night. Robbers do sleep in the hay sometimes, Tom said so, and I don’t like robbers at all.’

‘Nor I either,’ said his father, smiling, ‘but perhaps Tom has made a mistake. I don’t think there would be much to be afraid of. However, as I must be back in town before bed-time, I can’t indulge my fancy for a night in a haystack, and I have no doubt auntie will let you sleep in a bed if you prefer it. But it is getting late,’ he continued, looking at his watch. ‘We shall have to be going soon. I wonder where the girls are;’ and he got up and looked all round.

‘I think they went to talk to Peggie



HAYMAKERS.

Graham,' said Maggie; 'she is working in the field at the back of the house, and she promised Cousin Mabel that she would bring her children for Mabel to see this afternoon.'

'Well, suppose you go and look for your cousins, Maggie,' said Mr. Dundas, 'as you seem to know where they are, and tell them that uncle wants them to be ready in——'

'Half an hour,' added Mr. Stirling. 'I told the carriage to be at the door at seven, and it is half-past six now.'

Her papa helped Maggie down the ladder, and off she went on her errand. She went first to the field in which she thought her cousins would be, but they were not to be seen; neither was Peggie anywhere visible, and Maggie did not know what to do. At last, she asked one of the other women who were at work, and she told her that Mabel

and Fanny had taken Peggie and her children with them to the house.

‘The young leddies,’ she said, ‘wanted their mother to see the bairns, and would tak’ no denial, though Peggie were loath to gang. She thocht as maybe Mistress Stirling wouldna care to be fashed wi’ looking at the weans. Peggie was just going home,’ the woman continued, ‘when Miss Mabel came, for she had her bit o’ washing to do the night, and couldna bide langer i’ the fields, but she’d been talking o’ the braw young leddie all the day, and was sair vexed to think o’ missing her.’

CHAPTER XIX.

GOING AWAY.



WHEN Maggie reached the house she found the carriage already at the door, and her aunt and cousins all in a bustle preparing to go. There were ever so many things to pack into the carriage—a large basket of flowers, a hamper of vegetables and fruit, and of course the girls' wild flowers and fern. Then, too, there were sundry parcels and band-boxes, which Mrs. Stirling had undertaken to send for her sister to different shops in town, the girls' hats to be cleaned and trimmed, frocks to be

made up, &c. ; for living in the country, Mrs. Dundas was always glad to take any opportunity that offered of getting things done in Edinburgh. There was nearly if not quite as much talk and noise as there had been at the arrival in the morning. But at length every one got in, Mabel and Fanny being on the back seat, and the two boys on the coach-box, and the carriage drove off. Archie and Herbert ran after it for a few minutes, but the horses went a good deal faster than they did and they soon had to give up. Then they sat down on the grass at the side of the avenue and watched the carriage until it passed through the gates, waving their hats and shouting good-bye many times. At last it turned the corner and went fairly out of sight. Herbert, I fancy, felt a little bit choky then, and almost

wished he had not said he should like to stay behind. But it was too late now, and so, like a brave little man, he determined to make the best of it, and not to think about his mamma and sisters any more than he could help, but of all the pleasures there were in store for him, while at The Hollies. Very soon he and Archie were having a grand scamper after Trot, who had come out to see what they were doing. Herbert began to think that Trot was not such a very bad dog after all, and almost forgave him for having run away with his hat. It was quite funny what a fancy Trot seemed to have taken to that particular hat. He tried to get it again when Herbert laid it down for a minute on the grass, but Herbert was too sharp for him this time, and would not let him have it. He threw a

stone for him to fetch instead. Trot did not like this half as well, and when he found that Herbert would not give him his hat, he jumped up and tried to take it off his head. He was a good big dog and almost knocked Herbert down, and Herbert did not quite like that. So Archie said 'Let's go and throw some sticks into the burn for him, and then he'll forget about the hat.' So they went down to the burn and Trot fetched a great many sticks out of the water. It was quite funny to see how much more lively he was now than he had been all the rest of the day. The fact was he was a very unsociable dog, and generally went into the sulks if Archie and his sisters had any little friends with them. No doubt now he was feeling very happy to think that that carriageful of people had really

gone at last. Besides, he disliked the heat. It made him feel sleepy and cross, and disinclined to do anything. But now the sun was going down, and an air had sprung up so that it was cool and pleasant, and Master Trot's spirits rose. He and the two little boys had a fine game together, and his funny tricks and merry gambols made Herbert quite forget all melancholy regrets.

However, little people get tired of the nicest games, and by-and-by Archie said, 'Let's play at something else. Let's go and get my horse, and then we'll pretend that we are two gentlemen hunting. Maggie has got one she will lend you, I dare say, and Trot shall be the dog.'

Herbert thought this a capital idea, so away they went for the horses. But what was Archie's concern when he found that

his beautiful new horse had lost one of its ears ! No one knew how it had happened or anything about it. Nurse was quite sure baby had not pulled it off, and Bessie and Maggie were equally sure that they had not done so. 'Never mind, Master Archie,' said Susan, 'if you give it me I will soon stick it on again.'

'But that's just it, Susan,' said the little fellow. 'I can't find it. I have looked everywhere and I can't think where it is. Baby must have pulled it off, nurse.'

'But I am sure baby hasn't,' said nurse; 'hunt about everywhere and no doubt you will soon find it.'

Archie did hunt, but it was a very long time before he could find it. He looked in every nook and corner of the nursery, but it was not there. Then he went into the

hall and the school-room, but met with no better success. At length, what he thought a very bright idea struck him. Off he darted to the kitchen.

‘You have taken my horse’s ear, cook,’ he said; ‘I know you have ’cause you said this morning when I showed it you, that it it would make capital soup. But it was too bad, because there was an old broken horse in the nursery cupboard that would have done quite as well. And now my nice new horse is spoilt.’

Cook burst out laughing, for the idea was such a funny one that she really could not help it. But she stopped at once when she saw what trouble the poor little fellow was in.

‘I did not take it, Master Archie,’ she said, ‘I really didn’t. I was only joking

when I spoke of making it into soup. You did not think I meant it, did you? Why it would be funny stuff, to be sure. But come, let me see if I cannot help you find it. Where have you looked?’

‘Oh, everywhere,’ said Archie, ‘and it’s quite gone, there’s no use looking any more, and it’s such a shame, for it was such a nice horse.’

‘So it was, Master Archie. But don’t let us give up yet. Let us go and look again. Four eyes are better than two.’

Archie felt a little comforted, and most willingly went with cook to have another hunt. They did not have to look far, for the unfortunate ear was soon found under the bench in the hall. How it came there, of course it was impossible to tell, but Archie felt very happy when cook said she could easily mend it for him.




THE WOUNDED HORSE.

‘ But you must not play with it until to-morrow,’ she said, ‘ because the glue will not be dry until then.’

At first Archie thought that he and Herbert would have to give up their game of being huntsmen, but fortunately he remembered that besides Maggie’s there was another old horse in the nursery. It was not so large or nice as his new one, but it was better than nothing, and as Herbert said, it was very easy to pretend that it was a fine big animal. So they had a capital hunt, and Archie came riding home in triumph with the fox’s brush in his hat, the brush being a twig of a fir-tree.

CHAPTER XX.

THE STORM.

ESSIE and Maggie were in the drawing-room with their mamma, when Archie and Herbert came in. Bessie had borrowed her mamma's shuttle, and was very busy practising her new accomplishment of tatting, and Maggie was looking at some pictures in a book. The boys peeped over her shoulder, but, not finding the pictures sufficiently amusing, Archie begged his mamma to tell them a story.

‘A story now!’ she exclaimed; ‘why it

is very nearly time that you two little men went to bed !’

Herbert looked rather grave, for the thought of bed-time brought back rather uncomfortable remembrances of his mamma being far away, and he began to wonder whether he could go to sleep without her good-night kiss. But Archie said,

‘It is not time yet, is it, mamma ? Baby has not gone to bed, has he ?’

‘Yes,’ replied Mrs. Dundas, ‘some time ago.’

‘But we need not go *quite* yet?’ said Archie, ‘need we, mamma ?’

‘No,’ replied Mrs. Dundas, ‘because I promised you should stay up till eight o’clock, and it is not quite that. But I should have thought you were both tired and ready for bed. Why you have been running about and romping the whole day.’

‘But I am not a bit tired,’ said Archie, ‘and I wish it was just the beginning of my birthday now. I wish the day wasn’t done. It has gone so fast.’

‘That is the way with most happy days,’ said his mamma. ‘And it has been a very happy day, hasn’t it?’

‘Yes,’ said Archie, looking grave, ‘papa asked God to let it be, and He has; and God hasn’t let it rain either. Wasn’t it kind of God.’

‘God is always kind,’ said Maggie, decidedly.

‘Of course,’ said Archie, ‘I know that quite well. But yet God doesn’t always let us have what we ask for, does He, mamma? Because, you know, it isn’t always good for us. But I am so glad it was good for me to have a fine day. I don’t mind if it does

rain now, because we don't want to play out of doors any more.'

'And I should not wonder if it did rain very soon now,' said Mrs. Dundas, 'and then the flowers will be glad too. It is getting so dark and cloudy.'

'Do you think there is going to be a storm, mamma?' said Bessie; 'I heard Sandy say he thought there would be to-night.'

'Well, I should not be surprised,' replied her mamma, 'it looks very black over there.'

And even while she spoke a bright flash of lightning darted over the sky. Herbert crept close to his aunt, and Archie said,

'We needn't go to bed now, need we, mamma? We may wait a little bit; for I don't like being in bed when there is a thunder-storm. I don't like the thunder at

all, and I can't think what is the use of it. I wish there was no thunder.'

'So do I,' said Herbert, plucking up courage to confess his fears, when he found that Archie was not ashamed to do so. 'But I don't mind it so much when there is somebody with me. I don't feel half so frightened then. But are the thunder and lightning of any use, auntie? Do they do any good?'

'Yes, they do a great deal of good, Herbert. So you must try to remember that when you feel frightened.'

'But the lightning kills people sometimes, mamma, doesn't it?' said Bessie; 'I am sure I have heard of people being killed by lightning.'

'Yes,' replied Mrs. Dundas, 'it is dangerous as well as useful. But that is the case

with many things. Sad accidents happen sometimes in trains, and yet we should not like to be without them. The best plan when we feel frightened is to try to remember that God can take care of us wherever we may be, and that no harm can happen to us without His will.'

'But, mamma, God could take care of us under a tree just as well as anywhere else, and yet people always say that we shouldn't stand under one in a thunder-storm.'

'Certainly not. It is never right to run into danger. Do you remember what the Lord Jesus said to the devil when the devil wanted Him to throw Himself off the pinnacle of the temple?'

'Yes, mamma, he said "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."'

'Quite right, my dear, and we should be

tempting God if, when we knew it was dangerous, we stood under a tree in a thunder-storm.'

'But, mamma, I don't understand what that means?' said Bessie.

'Well, I will try and see if I can make it plainer to you. Suppose you and I were walking on a high cliff, and I said to you, "Now mind you do not walk near the edge, for it is very dangerous, the ground may give way beneath you, and you will probably fall down and be killed." If, in spite of that, you wilfully chose to walk close to the edge, would you have any right to expect that I should save you if you did slip.'

'No, mamma, because I should be disobeying you. But God has not told us not to stand under a tree in a storm.'

'Not in direct words, but yet I think He

has. He has given us our reason and our minds which He meant us to use, and by using them, clever men have found out that it is dangerous to stand under a tree in a storm, and that is just the same thing as if God had distinctly said, "Don't do it." '

CHAPTER XXI.

SINGING.



HE storm grew more and more violent. The lightning flashed, and the thunder roared almost unceasingly; and in spite of all mamma's kind talk, their little hearts would quake and tremble.

'I do wish it would go away,' said Archie, and Herbert kept burying his face in his aunt's lap and stopping his ears.

'Shall I draw the blinds down, mamma?' said Maggie, 'then perhaps Herbert won't see the lightning.'

'The blind won't keep it out,' said Mrs.

Dundas. 'But I'll tell you what we'll do. James shall come and shut the shutters and light the lamp, and then perhaps these silly little men won't mind it so much. We'll go into the school-room though. That will be better, for I dare say papa will be coming in soon, and perhaps he will laugh at us for being such cowards.'

'Is papa out?' said Maggie.

'Yes, and I wish he would come in, but very likely he will go into a cottage and stay there until the storm is over.'

Archie did not much like being thought a coward, and as they went along to the school-room, kept assuring his mamma that he was not really frightened. 'Only, you know, I don't *like* it,' he said. 'The thunder makes such a noise, and the lightning comes so suddenly that it makes me jump.'

However, coward or no coward, he certainly felt far more comfortable when he found himself in a room where the shutters were closed and the curtains drawn, and the flashes could no longer be seen. Herbert, too, ventured to let his aunt's hand go, and looked less pale.

‘How funny it seems to have the lamp alight,’ said Bessie. ‘It seems just like winter. Oh! mamma,’ she added, suddenly, ‘couldn’t you try and take Archie’s portrait now, with that thing Mr. Walker gave you. You know you said you thought you could do it best by lamp light. Do try, mamma. It will be such fun watching you.’

‘Well, I will if you like,’ said Mrs. Dundas.

So Bessie ran away to fetch ‘the thing,’ as she called it. It was a kind of large transparent



TAKING A PORTRAIT.



slate, and the person or object to be drawn had to be placed behind it. Archie planted himself on a stool, and Mrs. Dundas began; but, though I don't know how it was, she did not succeed very well. I suppose she did not understand how to do it, but as I have only heard about such a contrivance, and have never seen one, I cannot tell you what the mistake was. Perhaps she arranged the light wrong, but I really don't know. At any rate the drawing was not much like Archie. Herbert thought it was more like Punch; and Bessie and Maggie were very glad that their little brother was not quite so hideous as the picture made him out to be. They wanted their mamma to try again, but she said no, it was only waste of time until she understood more about the process.

Then the children drew each other, and

you would have laughed if you could have seen the funny things which they produced. However, it amused them ; and Mrs. Dundas feeling that her efforts were no longer needed, took up a book and began to read. But she was not left long in peace. A crashing, rattling peal which sounded as if exactly over the house, brought timid, little Herbert again to her side.

‘What, frightened again?’ she said. ‘Come, let us try and make a noise too, and then perhaps we shall not hear the thunder.’ And she got up and went to the piano. Herbert was very fond of music, so his aunt’s efforts to divert his thoughts succeeded very well. He listened with the greatest delight as she played one pretty piece after another, and eagerly asked for more. By degrees, the children left their play and came round the

piano too, at least, Bessie and Maggie did. Archie never cared for music, so he amused himself with drawing his horse about the room.

‘Let us all sing,’ said Mrs. Dundas, and she began a pretty, little, easy song. Bessie and Maggie at once joined in with very sweet, little voices, and Herbert listened with the greatest delight. Then they sang some hymns, and Herbert sang too, and thought it most delightful.

CHAPTER XXII.

GOING TO BED.

MEANWHILE, the storm had really begun to pass away. The rain, indeed, still came down in torrents, but the thunder, though from time to time it rumbled faintly, had gone right away into the distance; and Mrs. Dundas said the children must really go to bed. So, bidding Bessie find Archie, she kissed them all, and sent them away.

On their way upstairs Maggie and Herbert heard one of the servants say that Farmer Wilkes's house had been struck,

and this news brought back all Herbert's fears.

'Do you think it will strike this house?' he asked of Maggie.

'Oh no!' said Maggie, 'because, you see, the storm has gone away now.'

'But perhaps it will come back again,' said Herbert.

'I don't think it will,' said Maggie, 'and if it does, I daresay you will be asleep, and not know anything about it. There was a bad storm a little while ago in the night, but it didn't wake me, and I daresay it won't wake you.'

'When I say my prayer, I shall ask God not to let it thunder,' said Herbert.

'Like Archie asked Him not to let it rain,' said Maggie. 'Mamma says God likes little children to tell Him what they want, though

He does not always give them what they ask for, because, you know, it wouldn't always be good for them. I think it is so kind of God to listen to little children like you and me, don't you? Because, you know, God has such a number of things to take care of.'

'Yes,' said Herbert, 'He has got all the people that live in Edinburgh to take care of, and there are such a number of people there.'

'But mamma says there are even more people in Glasgow, and a great many more in London, and you know God takes care of all them too; and He takes care of all the black people that live in India. And then there are the animals and birds, and the flowers and trees, and the angels too—I forgot them—and the people that have died and gone to heaven. And yet mamma says God always listens to our prayers when we

pray properly. I think it is very wonderful.'

Thus Maggie and Herbert chatted till they reached the nursery; and thinking in this way about God's power and love made Herbert feel much happier.

Meanwhile, Bessie had gone to look for Archie. It was some time before she found him, for he had wandered off into a long stone passage that was separated from the principal part of the house by a heavy, cloth door. He had wanted to play with his hoop, and being unable to go out on account of the rain, thought this the best place in which to trundle it. He was just in the height of his enjoyment when Bessie called him, and he thought it very hard to have to stop his fun. But, happily, the thought flashed across his mind that it would be very

sad if, after every one had been so good to him, he should end his happy birthday by being disobedient. So he ran away at once to the school-room with his hoop in his hand. His mamma had just risen from the piano and was preparing to put away the music. When Archie saw her, he could not resist just saying, 'Need I go to bed yet?' but when she replied, 'Certainly, Archie; it is very late, and the storm is quite over now,' he did not say any more, but giving her what he called one of his 'very best kisses,' went upstairs like a good, little boy.

When he reached the nursery, he found that Herbert was very nearly ready for bed, and that Maggie had gone away with Susan to her own little room. Of course he could not think of going to sleep until he had kissed his dear, little sister, so nurse gave him

leave to go after her. Susan was tucking Maggie up as Archie entered the room, and the little girl's back was turned to the door. She gave a great start as Archie jumped upon her bed, and then they both laughed.

‘Hasn’t it been a capital day?’ said Maggie.

‘Yes,’ said Archie; ‘I wish it was going to be my birthday again to-morrow. It seems such a long time to wait for a whole year.’

‘But my birthday will come before that,’ said Maggie, ‘and Bessie’s too, and we shall be sure to have some fun then. So it won’t be a whole year to wait before we have another nice day. Besides, there are lots of nice days beside birthdays.’

‘Most of your days are nice, I think,’ said Susan, ‘you don’t seem very sad on any of them.’

‘No,’ said Archie, ‘but then birthdays are the nicest of all, because, on them, people give us such nice things.’

‘But so they do at Christmas,’ said Maggie.

‘Yes,’ said Archie, ‘I wonder why that is?’

‘I think it is because it is the Lord Jesus’ birthday,’ said Maggie. You know people can’t give things to Him, because He is in heaven, but I daresay He is just as pleased for other people to get them as if He had them Himself.’

‘I daresay He is,’ said Archie, thoughtfully. ‘How kind the Lord Jesus is. I shall try to be very good this year, because He has given me such a beautiful birthday.’

‘Make a beginning then, Master Archie,’ said Susan, ‘by kissing your sister and running



FAST ASLEEP.



back to the nursery. Didn't nurse tell you to be quick ?'

'So she did,' said Archie ; 'I quite forgot.' And he gave his sister a good kiss, and scrambled off the bed.

Half an hour after, Mrs. Dundas went up to see the children in bed, but they were all fast asleep. Nurse was not in the room, having left it for a few minutes to fetch something that was needed for the night ; and Mrs. Dundas sat down in the chair by the baby's cradle. She looked round upon the sleeping children, Archie, baby, and Herbert, and then she thought of the two little girls whom a minute before she had seen resting peacefully in another room, and in her heart she thanked God for His great goodness. Her darlings were healthy and strong, and she had plenty of money to buy

them good food and nice clothes, while many mothers, she knew, had a hard and bitter struggle to keep their pale, sickly, ragged, little ones from starving.

‘Not more than others I deserved,’ she murmured to herself, ‘Yet God has given me more.’ Then she prayed fervently that God would help her to bring up the children whom He had given her, to love and serve Him, so that, not only in this world they might be a joy and happiness to her and to one another, and to all around them, but might, at last, all see the dear Lord Jesus, and live with Him for ever in heaven.

THE END.



